



# Diamondhead, Mississippi

## 25 Year Comprehensive Plan

**Adopted by the Mayor and City Council Thursday, September 13, 2012**

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In Memoriam: Sandy Jassby

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## INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of this Comprehensive Plan is to serve as a policy guide for the orderly physical and economic development for Diamondhead. The data gathered and included in this comprehensive plan encompasses social, economic, and physical characteristics of the community and applies to both public and private lands. The plan brings together this information to enable the user to make more informed decisions regarding the future of the community. The future is considered to be a 25 year horizon.

### ELEMENTS OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A comprehensive plan is a policy document with specific components required by law. Diamondhead has the authority to prepare a comprehensive plan and implement planning through the enabling legislation, codified beginning at §17-1-1 Mississippi Code Annotated, 1972.

The specific legal contents of a comprehensive plan are set out in § 17-1-1 of the Mississippi Code. Through the eyes of the law, four components are required of a document to constitute a comprehensive plan including: **Goals and Objectives, a Land Use Plan, a Transportation Plan and a Community Facilities Plan.** This plan contains each of these four elements along with some additional components which are useful in determining how best to accommodate future growth.

### HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

#### Overview

It is important to understand that this plan is a policy statement and does not have the force of law. Because it is not law, the City of Diamondhead may

deviate from the provisions of the plan without any certain penalty. Doing so without good reason is not advisable, however, from the standpoint of achieving consistent application of this plan. It is recommended that the plan be reviewed periodically, possibly every five years, and updated as appropriate. Comprehensive planning is not a fortune telling exercise, but is a best estimate of what the future may hold for a community.

Comprehensive plans must precede land use regulations in preparation and adoption. Regulations that are consistent with, or conform to, a comprehensive plan must be consistent with a plan's policies, goals and objectives, the land use plan map and the other plan elements. Even though there is generally not an exact identity between the land use plan map and the zoning map, the two should mirror each other as closely as possible.

The goals and objectives element provides written, consistent policies addressing how the community should develop. The plan enables the legislative body to make decisions on development matters that arise, using a unified set of general, long-range policies. The plan is intended to serve as a practical working guide to the governing body in making decisions.

The governing body uses the comprehensive plan to take action on two types of physical development matters: (1) measures that are specifically designed to implement the comprehensive plan (zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, capital improvements program and budget, the official map, development plans, and architectural guidelines), and (2) other measures which routinely require legislative approval (rezoning cases, special use permits/special exceptions/conditional use permits, variance applications, subdivision plats, site acquisitions, and public work projects). For both types, the plan should be consulted at least to see if the plan speaks specifically to the matter or provides any guidance as to how the matter should be handled. It should be remembered that the plan may not indicate what action to take, nor will it answer all the questions that come before the governing body. It is not supposed to; its purpose is to serve as a generalized guide.

#### Implementation Devices

This plan will not benefit the community in any way if it is not implemented. There are three primary devices commonly used to implement comprehensive plans: a zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, and a capital improvement program. Other devices include official maps and specific development plans. These devices, as well as any comprehensive plan, should be reviewed periodically to account for changes that may have occurred in the community.

The various regulations work together to ensure the public health and safety of the city. Zoning ordinances ensure compatibility of land uses through regulating how the land is used within the various zoning districts and mandates the site requirements such as building setbacks and height. Subdivision regulations establish a legal minimum standard for residential development and public infrastructure that services the development. The capital improvement program (CIP) is a five (5) year plan that identifies capital projects and equipment purchases, provides an implementation schedule, and categorizes the funding mechanism for financing the plan.

The most important implementation device for this plan will be the governing body and the citizens of the community. Achieving many of the recommendations will require difficult decisions on the part of the City Council, some even politically contentious decisions. There is fierce competition among communities to attract new residents, employment opportunities, and economic development. Cohesiveness among the citizens builds momentum toward achieving desired goals.

## CHAPTER 1. GENERAL ELEMENTS

### LOCATION

The City of Diamondhead is located on the Eastern border of Hancock County, Mississippi, bisected by Interstate Highway 10 and approximately 60 miles east of New Orleans, Louisiana, and 90 miles west of Mobile, Alabama. It is situated 167 miles south of the state capital city of Jackson, Mississippi, which is accessed by way of Interstate Highway 10 and U.S. Highway 49. Interstate 10 and U.S. Highway 49 are four-lane highways. Distances to other major cities are summarized below:

**TABLE 1.1 Distance to Selected Cities from Diamondhead**

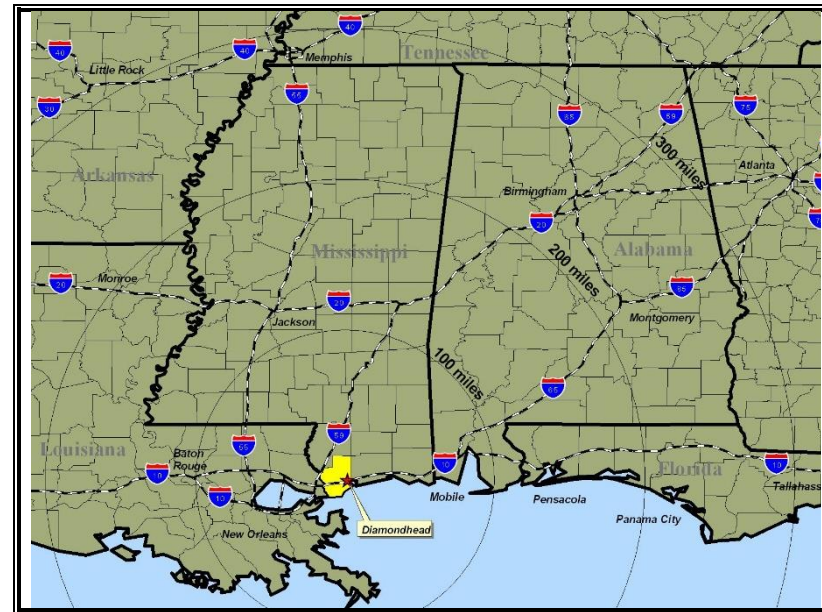
City	Distance (miles)
Atlanta, GA	415
Jackson, MS	167
Houston, TX	382
Memphis, TN	375
New Orleans, LA	60
Mobile, AL	90

Map 1.1 provides a graphical context of the regional location of Diamondhead, Mississippi.

### REGIONAL RELATIONSHIP

Diamondhead is part of a large regional community and is located on Interstate 10 which is a primary transportation route that runs along the southern boundary of the United States stretching from Los Angeles, California to Jacksonville, Florida. Diamondhead is located in Hancock

County which is part of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Region that consists of six (6) counties (Pearl River, Stone, George, Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson) with a total population of 466,900<sup>1</sup>, all within an hour's drive of Diamondhead. Three (3) of the counties (Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson) are located on the Gulf of Mexico with a total population of 370,702<sup>2</sup>. Within the six (6) county area, the largest cities are Gulfport (67,793)<sup>3</sup> and Biloxi (44,054)<sup>4</sup>, both of which are located in Harrison County immediately to the east of Diamondhead. Within Hancock County, Bay St. Louis is the largest city (9,260)<sup>5</sup> and Diamondhead, as a newly incorporated city, is the second largest (8,425)<sup>6</sup>.



**Map 1.1. Regional Locator Map.**

This map indicates the regional location of Diamondhead, as represented by the red star. The yellow area represents Hancock County. The concentric rings are spaced at 100 miles increments.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census 2010 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census 2010 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census 2010 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census 2010 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census 2010 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census 2010 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data

**THE CITY GOVERNMENT**

The City operates under the Council-Manager form of government. The governing body consists of the Mayor and a five-member City Council, in whom the legislative power of the City is vested. The City Manager has the superintending control of all officers and affairs of the City and the duty to see that the laws and ordinances of the City are executed.

Four members of the Council are elected from wards and one Councilperson is elected at large. The Mayor is elected at large. The Mayor and Council members are elected for concurrent four-year terms.

Pursuant to Mississippi law, the City has appointed a City Manager to be the Chief Administrative Officer who is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the City.

At the time of this writing, Diamondhead has existed as a municipality for merely months. As a new, start-up city, its structure and operations are still being developed.

**CLIMATE**

The mild climate of the Mississippi Gulf Coast has long attracted tourists and industry alike. Diamondhead has an average high temperature of 76° Fahrenheit and an average low temperature of 58°. The warmest month is July while the coolest is January. While July is historically the warmest month, a record high temperature of 104° was recorded during the month of August in 1986. The recorded low temperature of 6° occurred a year earlier in January of 1985. Diamondhead receives an average of 5.4 inches of rain per month totaling approximately 65 inches annually.

**HISTORY**

Diamondhead was begun in 1969 as a planned community that would be a destination for retirement age citizens of nearby New Orleans, Gulfport, Biloxi,

and the surrounding counties of South Mississippi and Southeast Louisiana. The first lot for house construction was sold in 1970.

Diamondhead was named after the Diamond Head Volcano in Hawaii. This Hawaiian influence can be seen throughout the community. Most notable are the street names and the architecture of various community centers and several private homes whose most dominate feature is the Kona/Tahitian roof lines.

Over the last forty years the demographic make up of Diamondhead has changed from that of a retirement community to that of any small suburban type area. Diamondhead consisted primarily of residential properties and recreational amenities, all bound together and managed under the Diamondhead Property Owners Association, Inc. (POA). The area within the POA jurisdiction lay both north and south of Interstate 10, but sandwiched in between was a node of neighborhood commercial development which falls outside the jurisdiction of the POA.

Members of the Diamondhead POA recognized that their community could some day be the target of annexation by a nearby municipality. The perceived threat was heightened when in 2002 the City of Bay St. Louis included a portion of the Diamondhead community in its annexation feasibility study. The members of the Diamondhead community began to consider how to best protect their assets.

Hurricane Katrina devastated the Mississippi Gulf Coast in 2005. Practically every home in Diamondhead, south of Interstate 10 was demolished, and a number of homes north of I-10 suffered significant flooding and damage, and some even destroyed.

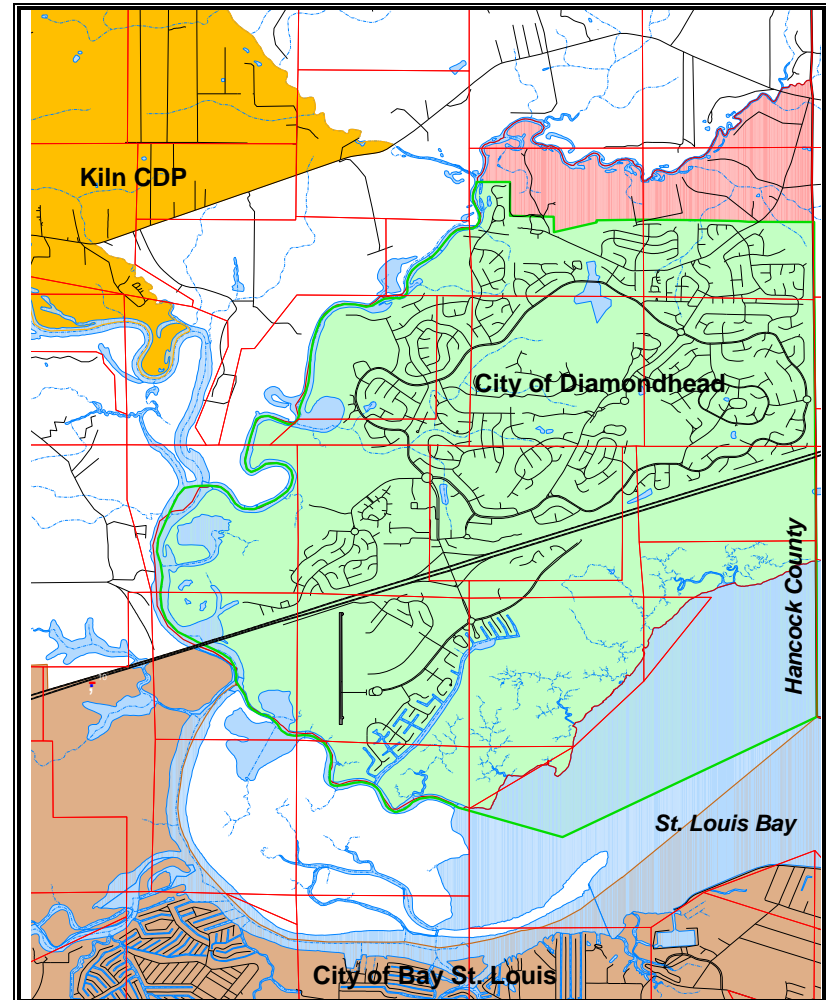
In July 2006 the POA commissioned a study to determine how best to protect its assets. The study thoroughly explored three obvious courses of action available to the community: 1) remain status quo, 2) be annexed by a nearby municipality (either willingly or unwillingly), or 3) undertake the incorporation procedures to create a new municipality. After having considered each of these options, it was determined that a successful incorporation effort would best meet the goals of protecting the character of the community and its assets.

The incorporation process began in 2007 when a petition with signatures of more than two-thirds of the qualified electorate was collected by a group of Diamondhead residents. An official incorporation petition was filed in Hancock County Chancery Court on July 22, 2008. The court heard the case in January 2009. Shortly after the trial ended the presiding chancellor died before issuing his ruling. The Mississippi Supreme Court then appointed a special chancellor over the case. The new judge issued a ruling in January 2010 approving the incorporation. His ruling was then appealed to the Mississippi Supreme Court by three opponents to the incorporation. Their appeal was based on the claim that the chancery court lacked jurisdiction over the petition. Their reasoning being that the petition did not include two-thirds of the signatures of the qualified electors residing in the area. In addition, the opponents claimed that they were denied their right of cross-examination at the incorporation hearing, and that the second chancellor failed to order a new incorporation trial. The appeal was submitted to the Mississippi Supreme Court without oral arguments in June 2010. The Mississippi Supreme Court ruled that the opponent's arguments were without merit and unanimously affirmed the incorporation of Diamondhead in October of 2011.

Reconsideration of the decision was requested and was denied by the court on January 19, 2012. The Charter of Incorporation of The City of Diamondhead, Hancock County was certified by the Secretary of State, C. Delbert Hosemann, Jr. on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2012 and was presented to The City of Diamondhead and the Mayor and Council on February 6, 2012.

## GEOGRAPHY

Although Diamondhead is primarily planning for growth within its current corporate limits, the long range planning area includes a slightly larger extraterritorial area. The territory incorporated is smaller than the Diamondhead Census Designated Place (CDP). To have an understanding of census reported data, which is consistent with the boundaries of the CDP, the planning area includes the balance of the CDP which was not incorporated. Map 1.2 illustrates this geography.



**MAP 1.2. Planning area geographies for this comprehensive plan.**

The light red shaded area along the northern boundary of Diamondhead city limits is the remainder of the Diamondhead Census Designated Place (CDP). The incorporation effort did not include the entire CDP.

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## **CHAPTER 2. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES**

The principal functions of the goals and objectives is to set forth the overall outline of the planning program, provide points of common agreement between public officials, the Planning Commission, and individual citizens, and to bring community attitudes and opinions into focus prior to initiating the more detailed studies and analyses that are undertaken later in the planning program.

For a better understanding of goals, objectives and policies, consider the following:

**Goals** are statements of the community's desires, vision, or aspirations for the community. As such, goals are not necessarily ever achieved and brought to an end. As broad statements, goals are to identify the purpose of an effort, and are not easily measured.

**Objectives** are statements that serve the purpose of narrowing the broadly stated goal into something more specific and measurable. Objectives are formulated to move toward achievement of the goal, and are more precise in terms of directing energies toward an action.

**Policy** statements then follow objectives. The stated policies serve as the basis for decision-making. Policies are very specific and are directed toward carrying out the objectives, which in turn are designed to achieve a certain goal. In some cases, comments or illustrations are provided following the policy statements to explain the planning principle and basis for the policy statement.

### **GENERAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The basic goal of City officials and community leaders is the development of a safe, healthy, and attractive community with a good living and working environment including ample family oriented recreational facilities and programs. Within this basic goal lies a commitment from community leaders to attempt to manage the growth of Diamondhead while maintaining and strengthening its sense of community identity and sense of community pride,

"pride in being from Diamondhead". Additionally, it is incumbent upon city leaders to properly manage the newly developing city through the achievement of this overarching goal that will focus in large measure on the development and implementation of sound and achievable programs and activities for community development.

The following is a listing of specific goals, objectives and policies which are designed to reach the major goals established by community leaders and outlined in this Comprehensive Plan. These goals, objectives, and policies were established following discussions with planning commission members regarding the general desires and mindset of the community. Important among the issues include the quality of life available in Diamondhead and preserving that quality of life. Where appropriate, the goals and objectives have been enhanced utilizing sound planning principles and additional commentary is provided to aid in the understanding of the goal, objective or policy. Often an objective or policy may relate to multiple goals; therefore, some repetition may appear.

### **LAND USE GOALS**

**Goal 1: To provide for the orderly and logical spatial arrangement of development or redevelopment in the city of Diamondhead.**

**Objective 1.1:** Avoid the creation of incompatible land uses as Diamondhead develops or redevelops, and to remedy over time the existing incompatible land uses that have occurred.

**Objective 1.2:** To encourage the development or redevelopment of the existing commercial area of Diamondhead into a more coherent and organized pattern of development.

**Objective 1.3:** Ensure the protection and betterment of the public health, safety, and general welfare, including the provision for adequate light, air and circulation, separation and open space between land uses, prevent overcrowding, protection of the value of property and the protection of the integrity of the various neighborhoods within the City of Diamondhead.



**Objective 1.4:** Provide for the protection of property values by the creation of a level of certainty regarding the use and reuse of lands within the city, and to create a positive sense of place.

**Policy 1.4.1:** The Mayor and Council will adopt land use control regulations to cover the entirety of the municipality.

**Goal 2: Guide and direct development in a manner which is sensitive and responsible with respect to the natural environment and natural resources.**

**Objective 2.1:** Provide an incentive for developers and land owners to preserve environmentally sensitive areas and to employ development techniques which result in the conservation of natural resources or otherwise benefit the natural environment.

**Policy 2.1.1:** The City of Diamondhead considers the natural environment for which concern is given to be areas of delineated wetlands, areas designated as Special Flood Hazard according to FEMA, areas of historical significance, areas of mature tree growth, and areas or corridors which provide views of the St. Louis Bay and other recreational waters within the city.

**Policy 2.1.2:** The City of Diamondhead will develop a means within its regulations to provide density or intensity bonuses, or a reduction in development requirements, for developments which work toward the implementation of this goal and objective.

**Policy 2.1.3:** The City of Diamondhead will encourage developments which provide a mixture of land uses, emphasize the pedestrian/automobile compatibility, place residents in close proximity to employment opportunities and other daily needs. By way of example, cluster development patterns are effective in protecting environmentally sensitive areas.

**Policy 2.1.4:** These policies are not intended to outright prohibit development of environmentally sensitive areas. Instead, they are intended to encourage the responsible development of such areas. The City of Diamondhead recognizes that certain constrained properties can possess locational characteristics which encourage development, regardless of constraint. Further, the City of Diamondhead recognizes that much of its remaining vacant land suffers from environmental constraints. As such, responsible development is desirable.

**Goal 3: Guide and direct development to locations that allow for the most efficient utilization of existing investment in public infrastructure and public facilities.**

**Objective 3.1:** Minimize the public investment necessary to provide municipal services to future developments within Diamondhead.

**Policy 3.1.1:** The City of Diamondhead will encourage development to first locate in areas that are served with adequate utilities and require no further costly utility extensions or improvements.

**Policy 3.1.2:** The City of Diamondhead will assess the intensity of development and encourage its location with respect to available service facilities and capabilities. Developments will be guided to areas to best accommodate the service demands including, but not limited to, water supply, wastewater demands, fire protection requirements, traffic generation, and access to transportation routes.

**Policy 3.1.3:** The City of Diamondhead will impose a concurrency requirement in its land development regulations, which will mandate that services be adequate and available at the time of development, or in the alternative, that a plan be in place to ensure the delivery of adequate services within a reasonable time after development.

**Policy 3.1.4:** The City of Diamondhead will employ a program whereby public infrastructure improvements, when necessary, are achieved as a result of public efforts, private efforts, and public-private partnerships.

**Objective 3.2:** Maximize the benefit of public investment in existing municipal service facilities and capabilities.

**Policy 3.2.1:** The City of Diamondhead will encourage infill development to occur, particularly in those areas which are already served with public utilities and other infrastructure.

**Policy 3.2.1:** The City of Diamondhead will encourage redevelopment for those areas damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Katrina or other natural disasters.

**Policy 3.2.3:** The City of Diamondhead recognizes the impossibility of achieving full build out within the municipal limits and therefore acknowledges that the availability of vacant developable land is not the sole factor to consider when guiding and directing development.

**Goal 4: To create and continue a built environment that is pedestrian and vehicle friendly, aesthetically pleasing, multi-functional, and attractive to a variety of development markets; and to create a city with a high level of retail opportunities, along with other appropriate land uses.**

**Objective 4.1:** To foster and accommodate market forces which would support residential and non-residential development.

**Objective 4.2:** To further develop the commercial areas in Diamondhead with consistent and appropriate architectural and design features so as to be unique, attractive and a desirable place to, work, shop, or seek services.

**Policy 4.2.1:** The City of Diamondhead will create, adopt, and enforce land use regulations to address architectural compatibility within the city.

**Policy 4.2.2:** Diamondhead will pursue infill development to allow or encourage vacant properties to serve an urban function.

**Policy 4.2.3:** The City will establish architectural guidelines to convey the desired character of the built environment, encouraging diversity in design consistent with the Polynesian theme and pedestrian scale.

**Objective 4.3:** To aid in the development and redevelopment of vacant, underdeveloped, or blighted portions of the city.

**Policy 4.3.1:** The City of Diamondhead will explore any potential role it may have to aid, assist, and otherwise facilitate activities to further this objective.

**Goal 5: To recognize the potential for market driven urban development patterns to continue along a lot-by-lot development pattern that presently characterizes the City.**

**Objective 5.1:** To recognize that within the urban development market, some segment of consumers desire to live, shop, and otherwise interact in developments that are less compact and automobile oriented.

**Policy 5.1.1:** The City of Diamondhead will include within its land development regulations the necessary language to permit the continuance of lot-by-lot development pattern that presently characterizes much of the city today.

**Policy 5.1.2:** The City of Diamondhead will require that any continuation of the lot-by-lot development pattern

adhere as closely as possible to the various goals, objectives, and policies of this plan.

## **TRANSPORTATION GOALS**

### **Goal 6: Provide a safe means for vehicular and pedestrian circulation.**

**Objective 6.1:** Provide adequate signage and striping along the streets to regulate and direct traffic as needed.

**Policy 6.1.1:** Diamondhead should review the street signage within the city and develop a plan for replacing those signs which have become an eyesore (faded, dented, defaced, etc.), or to reinstall missing signage, or update it to meet reflectivity standards. Street striping should be evaluated as well, particularly pedestrian crossings.

**Objective 6.2:** Increase the opportunity for pedestrian mobility throughout the city.

**Policy 6.2.1:** The existence and condition of sidewalks should be evaluated and sidewalks should be installed or improved where needed.

**Policy 6.2.2:** Sidewalk repairs or installations should be made with priority based on frequency of utilization.

**Policy 6.2.3:** Diamondhead will consider the feasibility of installing or otherwise providing for bike lanes along public streets where none currently exist and such is necessary.

**Policy 6.2.4:** Diamondhead will seek to continue the allowance for golf carts and other forms of transportation to be utilized throughout the community.

**Objective 6.3:** Improve the safety and attractiveness of access to private properties.

**Policy 6.3.1:** Diamondhead should consider establishing and enforcing a curb cut policy to limit the access points along commercial corridors and to improve the appearance of transportation corridors.

**Objective 6.4:** Ensure the reservation of right-of-way for future transportation routes.

**Policy 6.4.1:** As development occurs along the path of any planned transportation routes, Diamondhead should require, as a condition of development approval, the reservation of an appropriate right-of-way corridor.

**Policy 6.4.2:** Diamondhead should require, through appropriate development regulations, newly constructed streets be laid out so as to facilitate future extensions or connections.

## **HOUSING GOALS**

### **Goal 7: Improve and maintain high quality housing stock in the community.**

**Objective 7.1:** City of Diamondhead will enact regulations to ensure proper safety, durability and maintenance of existing housing.

**Objective 7.2:** Ensure that new housing is built to current standards for safety, durability, and functionality.

**Policy 7.2.1:** The City of Diamondhead should, where reasonable, adopt and enforce the most current and up to date suite of building codes, but not without careful review of code requirements and necessary adjustments to fit the uniqueness of the community.

**Policy 7.2.2:** The City of Diamondhead should utilize property maintenance codes and unsafe building

abatement codes, requiring that dilapidated homes and buildings be removed and damaged buildings be repaired.

**Policy 7.2.3:** The City of Diamondhead will maintain its publicly owned property to the same or higher standard as that required of its citizens.

**Goal 8: Promote infill housing development in Diamondhead.**

**Objective 8.1:** Attract new housing developments to locate upon underutilized properties within the city.

**Policy 8.1.1:** The City will seek to fill vacant lots within the city. While the city is not in the development business, city leaders can aid in the facilitation of such developments.

**Objective 8.2:** Provide a wide field of housing opportunities within Diamondhead in the form of housing types and housing costs.

**Policy 8.2.1:** Diamondhead will promote the concept of mixed use development by encouraging a vertical mix of land uses within commercial areas. The City regards as desirable the concept of allowing residential space above commercial space within commercial areas (commercial on the first floor, housing on the second floor); however, such mix should not be utilized to the extent that residential units supplant otherwise commercial development opportunities.

**Policy 8.2.2:** The City of Diamondhead will maintain a diverse supply of housing available to people of all income levels, but will limit the proportion of standalone multifamily rental style housing to 10% of the city's housing stock. Places considered as group quarters will not be considered as multifamily housing for the purpose of this measurement, nor will townhouses.



**Figure 2.1 Townhouses**

*Townhouses are single family units arranged horizontally in a linear pattern. While the units are attached, each individual unit maintains a private entrance on the exposed front and rear wall of the structure.*

**Policy 8.2.3:** The City of Diamondhead will carefully monitor the level of housing development occurring within the city by location and type.

**Policy 8.2.4:** Housing and other development patterns that tend to concentrate conditions which are associated with blighting will be discouraged.

**Goal 9: Ensure the availability of housing opportunities within the City to meet the needs of all market sectors.**

**Objective 9.1:** To provide housing availability for an aging population.

**Policy 9.1.1:** The City of Diamondhead will encourage the development of housing designed to meet the needs of an aging population. Such design features include, but are not limited to handicap accessibility throughout the home, smaller lots (thus less maintenance), condominium ownership, wider sidewalks, group living, etc.

**Policy 9.1.2:** The City of Diamondhead will encourage the development of group housing development for the aging and elderly. This includes assisted living facilities and nursing homes.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES GOALS**

NOTE: The following goals, objectives, and policies should be read in conjunction with Chapter 5, Community Facilities and Services. Although the City of Diamondhead, at the time this plan was compiled, was in the process of developing its departments and services, the following goals, objectives and policies remain valid regardless of the entity providing the services.

**Goal 10: Provide excellent services throughout the city in an efficient and cost effective manner that responsibly balances the needs of the citizens with the cost of provision.**

**Objective 10.1:** The City will determine the most cost effective method of providing services to the citizens through interlocal agreements, development of city run departments, or acquisition of existing services providers.

**Objective 10.2:** Ensure that space is available for the expansion and extension of public services.

**Policy 10.2.1:** Diamondhead should require, as development occurs, the reservation or dedication of space for public use such as additional street right-of-way, park space, or space for public buildings or utilities.

**Objective 10.3:** Ensure there is a logical and compatible relationship between service facilities / capabilities and land uses.

**Policy 10.3.1:** Diamondhead will evaluate development proposals with regard to the intensity of service demands

(police, fire, water, sewer, etc.) and compare the same to the capability and impact of providing the required services.

**Policy 10.3.2:** Diamondhead will discourage development proposals with such an intensity of service demands (police, fire, water, sewer, etc.) that, if approved, could have a negative impact upon the level of services for existing city residents; unless, however, there is an adequate plan to provide the necessary services.

**Policy 10.3.3:** Diamondhead will encourage developers to aid in enhancing services and quality of life in Diamondhead by participating in and contributing to improvements to the community, financial or otherwise. Diamondhead will develop and utilize a method whereby agreements identifying specific improvements or performance are developed, followed and enforced.

**Objective 10.4:** Enhance public service facilities available to the citizens of Diamondhead.

**Policy 10.4.1:** Diamondhead should evaluate the type of recreational facilities most beneficial to city residents, and develop a plan to fulfill any unmet or emerging needs.

**Policy 10.4.2:** Diamondhead should work toward a continual enhancement of fire protection services within the city and in its fire classification rating assigned by the Mississippi State Rating Bureau.

**Policy 10.4.3:** The city will develop a system whereby streets which are in need of major repair are identified and prioritized, so that a means can be developed to address the maintenance needs.

**Objective 10.5:** Minimize the burden of infrastructure costs to the existing tax base.

**Policy 10.5.1:** Diamondhead will develop a system by which developers bear a proportion of the expense to extend and improve the infrastructure as necessary. This policy, however, shall not be construed in conflict with the policy of first locating development in areas presently served by adequate infrastructure.

**Goal 11: Enhance, to the extent possible, services delivered to the residents of Diamondhead from other governmental or quasi-governmental entities.**

**Objective 11.1:** To work in a mutually cooperative fashion with public and quasi-public agencies for the discharge of their duties within the City of Diamondhead.

**Policy 11.1.1:** The City of Diamondhead will make its resources available for the purpose of furthering this goal and objective; provided, however, that the city shall not place any burden upon the taxpayers of the city in doing so unless there is good and valuable benefit to city taxpayers.

## **COMMUNITY APPEARANCE AND SPIRIT**

**Goal 12: Improve and Enhance the Overall Appearance of the Community / Support a Continued Sense of Community Pride.**

**Objective 12.1:** Eliminate, to the extent possible, all dilapidated and abandoned structures in the city and require proper maintenance of unkempt properties.

**Objective 12.2:** Maintain public and private properties in the city so as to project a positive image of Diamondhead.

**Policy 12.2.1:** Diamondhead should adopt and/or enforce the necessary ordinances to empower it to compel property owners to clean their property by removing unused automobiles or discarded items, mowing tall grass,

removing dilapidated buildings and otherwise keeping property in a safe and presentable form.

**Policy 12.2.2:** Diamondhead will maintain public property to the same standards required for private property owners.

**Objective 12.3:** Improve the visual appearance of the community.

**Policy 12.3.1:** The city should adopt sign regulations to ensure that signage does not cast a cluttered and confused impression of the city.

**Policy 12.3.2:** Diamondhead should assess the appearance of the entrances to the city and take measures to improve the visual impact.

**Policy 12.3.3:** Diamondhead should assess parking lots and streets to determine where added landscaping would enhance the appearance. The purpose is to interrupt the continuous flow of asphalt from streets into parking lots.

**Policy 12.3.4:** The City of Diamondhead will address, to the extent necessary, negative conditions arising from inadequate property maintenance, including but not limited to the conditions of: inadequate parking space, trash, litter, clutter, automobiles, and similar conditions.

**Policy 12.3.5:** Diamondhead will control visual clutter through the application of sign regulations.

**Goal 13: Improve the Design Quality in New and Existing Commercial and Retail Developments.**

**Objective 13.1:** Promote the development of high-quality, aesthetically pleasing properties.

**Policy 13.1.1:** Implement and enforce design standards that address parking, streetscape, siting of buildings, transitions to adjacent uses, landscaping and buffers,

access management, pedestrian orientation, and other elements resulting in high-quality design.

**Policy 13.1.2:** The City of Diamondhead will encourage enhancements and improvements to existing structures, including façade improvements, landscaping and other visual features.

**Objective 13.2:** To ensure the desired design features for new development in Diamondhead is compliant with this plan.

**Policy 13.2.1:** Diamondhead will establish an appropriate site plan review process whereby the city has the opportunity to review designs and require changes which would further the implementation of this plan.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

### **Goal 14: Create and Promote Opportunities for additional Retail, Entertainment and Cultural Activity.**

**Objective 14.1:** Establish areas within the City that could appropriately accommodate gaming establishments and related retail and cultural uses such as restaurants, shopping opportunities, concerts and theatrical performances, convention and meeting space or other uses lending to an entertainment and resort style atmosphere.

**Policy 14.1.1:** The City of Diamondhead will encourage the location of gaming establishments and related uses in proximity to the interchange and south of I-10.

**Policy 14.1.2:** Appropriate design standards will be required to protect the character of the single family neighborhoods adjacent to any proposed commercial development.

**Objective 14.2:** Encourage entertainment or other cultural uses that will aid in establishing a sense of continuing activity, enhance the city's tax base and enhance the market opportunities for additional development, such as retail, service, or other entertainment venues to occur.

**Policy 14.2.1:** The City of Diamondhead will encourage land uses south of I-10 that will contribute to pedestrian activity within the area. Such uses should be of a nature such that they draw large enough shoppers, spectators, or patrons to encourage additional and related retail, entertainment, or cultural activity.

**Objective 14.3:** Encourage pedestrian activity in all commercial areas of Diamondhead.

**Policy 14.3.1:** As development occurs, the City of Diamondhead should assure that pedestrian features, such as benches, waste receptacles, bicycle racks, etc., are located in appropriate areas for public convenience.

**Policy 14.3.2:** Development and redevelopment should occur with a consistent architectural style designed for safety, functionality and promotion of the aesthetic quality of the area, built to a human scale. The architectural style should reflect the theme established within Diamondhead.

### **Goal 15: To Generate Additional Employment Opportunities within Diamondhead.**

**Objective 15.1:** Strengthen and increase the employment opportunities within the city.

**Policy 15.1.1:** Diamondhead will seek to attract diverse employment opportunities which may benefit from the city's population makeup, including public sector, research, retail, medical, service and entertainment industries and other potential employment sectors.

**Policy 15.1.2:** Diamondhead will continue strengthening its retail base and contemporaneously therewith seek to attract entertainment venues to add to the local economy.

**Objective 15.2:** Provide incentives which serve to enhance the creation of jobs and reuse of vacant buildings and properties.

**Policy 15.2.1:** Diamondhead will encourage the reuse, or an adaptive use, for existing vacant buildings and properties, and encourage the design and construction of new buildings in a manner to facilitate reuse.

**Policy 15.2.2:** Diamondhead will investigate the potential to provide financial incentives for economic development and the creation of jobs.

**Goal 16: Stimulate and Promote Economic Development within the Community.**

**Objective 16.1:** Provide a sense of welcome for new development or redevelopment.

**Policy 16.1.1:** Diamondhead development regulations and policies resulting from this comprehensive plan are not to be construed as restrictive, but are intended to be supportive of development.

**Policy 16.1.2:** The development regulations and policies resulting from this comprehensive plan are to be interpreted in a consistent and fair manner. Diamondhead recognizes the importance of a “level playing field” with regard to the competitive nature of real estate development.

**Objective 16.2:** Make the public aware of the city’s commitment to attracting economic development.

**Policy 16.2.1:** Form alliances with local Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Authorities, or other such agencies designed to locate and attract economic development.

**Policy 16.2.2:** Diamondhead should take an active role in ensuring information available to the public is accurate and up to date and readily available. This includes creating the city’s web site with continuing maintenance and updating and other forms of communication as such evolve, such as twitter and facebook<sup>7</sup> or other popular forms of social media.

**EDUCATION GOALS**

**Goal 17: Provide for the further enhancement of educational opportunities and the quality of education within the City of Diamondhead.**

**Objective 17.1:** To work cooperatively with and in support of the Hancock County School district in delivering educational services to residents of the city.

**Objective 17.2:** To ensure adequate space is available for the location of schools within the city.

**Policy 17.2.1:** When approving development proposals, Diamondhead will consider the impact population increases will have upon the school system and will seek input from the School District regarding the same, particularly in regards to enrollment.

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<sup>7</sup> Twitter and Facebook, at the time this plan was developed, were two predominate forms of internet based social medial.



**Policy 17.2.2:** Diamondhead will encourage the placement of a public school within the corporate limits.

**Objective 17.3:** To work cooperatively with and in support of the Diamondhead Continuing Education program to deliver continuing education services to adult residents of the city.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL AND “GREEN” GOALS**

**Goal 18: Develop or encourage building practices, services or procedures within Diamondhead that serve to enhance the natural environment by conserving energy and natural resources.**

**Objective 18.1:** Encourage the utilization of low speed vehicles on the streets of Diamondhead.

**Policy 18.1.1:** In addition to the allowances of House Bill 1670, the City of Diamondhead will encourage the development of private pathways into and through those areas that are not within the domain of the POA. This is for the purpose of enabling low speed vehicles to be utilized into and around the commercial areas of the City.

**Policy 18.1.2:** At the appropriate time, Diamondhead will seek to establish the facilities (such as metered charging stations) necessary to encourage the utilization of low speed vehicles.

**Objective 18.2:** Enhance the connectivity of neighborhoods within the City and encourage more pedestrian and bicycle activity upon the streets of the city.

**Policy 18.2.1:** As neighborhoods are laid out and proposed for development, the City of Diamondhead will seek to require public passage ways to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists and low speed vehicles.

**Policy 18.2.2:** Diamondhead will seek to establish a connection over Interstate 10 sufficient to safely accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists and low speed vehicles.

**Policy 18.2.3:** Diamondhead will seek funding to identify and install needed features along the public streets to encourage pedestrian or bicycle activity. Such features include but are not limited to signage, striping, dividers, lighting, surfacing, bridging, crossings, call boxes or similar safety features, refreshment area, trash receptacles, resting areas, and shaded areas.

**Objective 18.3:** Encourage energy efficient construction for newly developing commercial or industrial projects.

**Policy 18.3.1:** At the appropriate time, the City of Diamondhead will incorporate into its development regulations standards of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program of the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) or other similar programs.

**Objective 18.4:** Encourage energy efficient practices within the city.

**Policy 18.4.1:** Diamondhead will encourage the use of rain barrels, solar panel systems, pervious paving systems, swales and other similar practices as a means to conserve resources.

**Objective 18.5:** Implement city programs designed to enhance environmental quality.

**Policy 18.5.1:** Diamondhead will investigate the expansion of the recycling program either by reinstating curbside pickup or increasing the number of centralized drop-off locations.

**Policy 18.5.2:** Diamondhead will develop a plan for its storm water disposal system whereby sources of pollution

are reduced or elimination (This is commonly known as the Storm Water Phase II requirement).

**Policy 18.5.3:** Diamondhead will consider, at the appropriate time, adopting a “smoke free” ordinance.

**Objective 18.6:** Increase the public green space within the city.

**Policy 18.6.1:** As part of the development review and approval process, Diamondhead will seek to create publicly accessible green spaces within commercial and industrial developments.

the purpose of determining compliance with regulations, but also to gather statistical information regarding development activity.

## **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION GOALS**

**Goal 19: Continually interpret this plan and evaluate its effectiveness and impact on the community.**

**Objective 19.1:** Create a forum in which the City receives comment and feedback regarding the implications of this plan.

**Policy 19.1.1:** Following the adoption of this plan, the City will establish a means by which the effectiveness and implementation of this plan is measured. This task may be accomplished by the planning commission or some other established committee or staff.

**Policy 19.1.2:** The City of Diamondhead will utilize this plan as a guide when making land use and development decisions.

**Objective 19.2:** Facilitate future revisions and updates to this comprehensive plan as needed and increase the comprehensiveness of this plan.

**Policy 19.2.1:** Diamondhead should utilize a permitting system to enable the tracking and quantifying of development activity. This system should not only be for

## CHAPTER 3. DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The size and composition of a City's population are related directly to the attendant demand for community facilities and other municipal services. Similarly, the location and distribution of required community facilities and services are related directly to the density and distribution of population, both existing and future. Obviously, the more dense the population, the more critical the need for water and sewer services, and required educational and recreational services depend on the number and distribution of the population by age groups.

The entire concept of urban planning is based, to a large extent, on estimates of existing and future population. In a large measure, a meaningful analysis of existing facilities and services is based on the number, character, and distribution of the current population. Estimates of future population govern the allocation of future land uses, community facilities, and municipal services including but not limited to schools, recreational facilities, water and sewer facilities, and requirements for fire protection.

Many of the recommendations set forth in this report are based on or correlated with the population estimates contained in this chapter. Clearly, when conditions change within the community that affects population growth, either negatively or positively, the projections enumerated herein should be revised to reflect the changed conditions.

As of the writing of this plan, the task of projecting population is complicated due to the impact of Hurricane Katrina. Katrina caused shifts in population, due to the destruction of housing stock. While the population is expected to return, the question is how quickly and what new housing patterns will emerge.

### DEMOGRAPHIC HISTORY

#### Population

Population data is recorded every ten years by the United States Bureau of the Census, as it has done since 1790. The latest census, Census 2010, provides the most recent and readily available resource for demographic information. The success or quality of a community is sometimes gauged by changes in population. The assumption is that increasing population indicates a favorable community because people are choosing to move into the community (or choosing to stay as opposed to moving away). These statistics are often compared by community leaders to "gauge" the community's standing.

The population of Diamondhead has increased over time. Because Diamondhead is a new city, the most complete and readily available data for Diamondhead is reported by the Census Bureau for the Diamondhead Census Designated Place (CDP). This is an important distinction as portions of this report will include data for the CDP, and in some cases the data has been modified to reflect only the incorporated area. Map 1.2 indicates the geographical differences between the municipality and the CDP.

Over the decades, the population of the Diamondhead CDP has changed as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>
1980	1,011
1990	2,661
2000	5,912
2010	8,425

In considering population changes, it is important to consider the factors which impact population. Population can be affected by three different components:

1. In migration or out migration (persons moving in or moving away)
2. Net affect of births or deaths (natural increase), and
3. Change in geography (annexation or deannexation)

The City of Diamondhead has experienced changes in population due to only the first two factors. The city has not experienced any annexations or other geographical changes.

Table 3.1 depicts the population and population changes from 2000 to 2010 for the Diamondhead CDP and other geographic areas within Hancock County. The purpose of this comparison is not to indicate which community is “better” or “worse”, but to get an idea of where growth is occurring and the pace of that growth.

**TABLE 3.1 Population Changes**

Geographic Area	Total Population		Change	
	2000	2010	Number	Percent
Diamondhead	5,912	8,425	2,513	42.5%
Bay St. Louis	8,209	9,260	1,051	12.8%
Waveland	6,674	6,435	-239	-3.6%
Kiln (CPD)	2,040	2,238	198	9.7%
Pearlington (CPD)	1,684	1,332	-352	-20.9%
County Remainder	18,448	16,239	-2,209	-12.0%
Hancock County	42,967	43,929	962	2.2%
State of Mississippi	2,844,658	2,967,297	122,639	4.3%

*Source: US Census Bureau for years noted.*

The reader must use caution when reading Table 3.1. While the table indicates a significant population growth in certain areas, one must not lose sight of the fact that Hancock County as a whole only increased by 2.2%. The area that experienced the most growth within the county was Diamondhead. Population increased by over 42%, even considering the impact of Hurricane Katrina.

One noteworthy item to consider when reviewing table 3.1 is the fact that both Waveland and Bay St. Louis experienced annexations between the 2000 and 2010 census. While both were heavily hit during the storm, their population changes would be significantly different had annexations not occurred.

Note that population outside the cities and CDP’s (county remainder) has decreased by 2,209 persons. At first glance, one may deduce that over the decade people chose to dwell in the municipalities. This may be true to some extent, but again one must not lose sight of the fact that in August 2005 the eye of Hurricane Katrina struck the Mississippi Gulf Coast at Waveland.

## POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

### Age Structure

Changes within the population by age can reveal certain information about the future for Diamondhead. Table 3.2 provides the opportunity to see how age groups have changed over the decade between census periods. By comparing age strata over two census periods, the changes in specific age groups can be identified.

Table 3.2 demonstrates the age structure of Diamondhead’s population. As a retirement community, Diamondhead has an older population than Hancock County or the State of Mississippi. However, the trend from 2000 to 2010 for Diamondhead is not consistent with the county or state.

The median age for Diamondhead, Hancock County and the State of Mississippi are reported at the bottom of Table 3.2. The median age has increased for each of these areas, but Diamondhead has not aged at the same rate as the county or state. Perhaps this means Diamondhead has experienced in migration of a younger population.

The change in population between the youngest groups and oldest groups is similar, indicating the city’s population growth is primarily due to migration as opposed to natural increase. Regardless, Diamondhead remains to have an older population base compared to the county and state.

**TABLE 3.2: Change in population over time by age cohort.**

*Diamondhead has gained population in every age category.*

Age	Diamondhead				Change in Age Group
	2000	% tot	2010	% tot	
Under 5	292	4.9%	448	5.3%	156
5 to 9	302	5.1%	463	5.5%	161
10 to 14	330	5.6%	475	5.6%	145

15 to 19	258	4.4%	447	5.3%	189
20 to 24	119	2.0%	251	3.0%	132
25 to 34	556	9.4%	746	8.9%	190
35 to 44	825	14.0%	989	11.7%	164
45 to 54	838	14.2%	1,199	14.2%	361
55 to 59	449	7.6%	565	6.7%	116
60 to 64	472	8.0%	677	8.0%	205
65 to 74	890	15.1%	1,212	14.4%	322
75 to 84	502	8.5%	763	9.1%	261
85 and over	79	1.3%	190	2.3%	111
<i>Total</i>	<u>5,912</u>		<u>8,425</u>		
Median Age	<u>2000</u>		<u>2010</u>		
Diamondhead	48.4		48.5		
Hancock Co.	38.5		40.7		
Mississippi	33.8		36.0		
<i>Source:</i>					
<i>2000 and 2010 Summary Tape File 1, U. S. Census Bureau</i>					

An analysis of birth and death records would be revealing in terms of population age trends; however, the Mississippi Department of Health does not report birth and death data for census designated places.

### Racial Composition

Diamondhead is a community with a very small makeup of racial minorities among its population. The racial makeup of the Diamondhead CDP is set forth in Table 3.3 and indicates the data for both 2000 and 2010.

One aspect the racial component brings to a community is that of market opportunity. A population made up of different people of different races and ethnicities is a population with different preferences. People may have cultural preferences when it comes to purchasing goods or services. For instance, areas with a more diverse population may have a market opportunity for an Asian market. It appears as though Diamondhead is far away from such cultural diversity.

**TABLE 3.3 Diamondhead Racial Makeup**

Race	2000	% total	2010	% total
White	5,637	95.35%	7,915	93.95%
Black	105	1.78%	243	2.88%
Other	<u>170</u>	2.88%	<u>267</u>	3.17%
Total	5,912		8,425	
<i>Source: U. S. Census Bureau for years noted.</i>				

### HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

The housing characteristics for Diamondhead and Hancock County are presented in Table 3.4. As can be seen in the table, the number of housing units in Diamondhead increased from 2000 to 2010 by 1,224 dwelling units, or 39.7%. Although the number of housing units grew by 39.7%, Diamondhead's population grew by 42.5% over the same period. This difference in growth rates is partially explained by the slight change in household size over the decade.

The Census Bureau reports the statistic "Persons per Household" which is included as part of Table 3.4, and over the ten year period shown Diamondhead has gained on average 0.02 persons for each household. Hancock County households experienced a loss of 0.02 persons per household during the same time period. While Diamondhead experienced a slight growth, the County's shrinking household size is consistent with state and national demographic trends.

The increase (although slight) in household size for Diamondhead is consistent with a population that is stable in terms of its aging. Younger families moving into the area attribute to the increased household size.

The data in Table 3.4 also indicates trends in housing tenure and occupancy. The vacancy rate in Diamondhead has decreased from 17.0% in 2000 to 16.8% in 2010. At the same time, Hancock County had experienced an increase in the vacancy rate.

**Table 3.4: Housing tenure and vacancy rates.** Over the ten year period, Diamondhead shows growth in housing units as well as an increase in the renter occupied housing.

Census 2000	Diamondhead		Hancock County	
	No.	%	No.	%
Housing Units				
Occupied	2,559	83.0%	16,897	80.2%
Vacant	525	17.0%	4,175	19.8%
Total	3,084		21,072	
Owner Occupied	2,333	91.2%	13,447	79.6%
Renter Occupied	226	8.8%	3,450	20.4%
Total	2,559		16,897	
Persons per Hshld	2.29		2.52	
Census 2010	Diamondhead		Hancock County	
	No.	%	No.	%
Housing Units				
Occupied	3,586	83.2%	17,380	79.6%
Vacant	722	16.8%	4,460	20.4%
Total	4,308		21,840	
Owner Occupied	3,153	87.9%	13,360	76.9%
Renter Occupied	433	12.1%	4,020	23.1%
Total	3,586		17,380	
Persons per Hshld	2.31		2.50	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau for years noted.

It is unknown why the vacancy trend for Hancock County is opposite that of Diamondhead. The data presented for Hancock County includes all of Hancock County. Note the number of rental units increased in both Diamondhead and Hancock County.

As a benchmark, the vacancy rate statewide for 2000 was 9.9% and 12.5% in 2012. In 2000 and again in 2010, Diamondhead and Hancock County were above the state average.

The housing ownership mix in Diamondhead changed from 2000 to 2010. In 2000, owner occupied homes made up 91.2% of all housing in the city. By 2010, that percentage had dropped to 87.9% (conversely, renter occupied housing has risen). Countywide, however, the trend is similar over the same time period. Statewide, the housing ownership mix in 2010 was 69.6% owner occupied, and 30.4% renter occupied. Presently the home ownership mix in Diamondhead, when compared to the state benchmark, is well above average.

The increase in renter occupied housing could be the result of several factors. First, because of the economy some homes may be purchased for investment purposes and subsequently rented. Also due to the economy, seasonal visitors (snowbirds) could be choosing to rent as an alternative to purchasing in order to spend time in Diamondhead.

**TABLE 3.5 Housing mix in Diamondhead from 2000 to 2010**

Housing Mix	Dwelling Units				Change	
	2000	%	2010	%	No.	%
Single Unit	2,614	84.8%	3,108	86.4%	494	18.9%
Multi-Unit	397	12.9%	435	12.1%	38	9.6%
Mfg. Home/Other	66	2.1%	54	1.5%	-12	-18.2%
Boat, RV, Van, etc.	7	0.2%	0	0.0%	-7	-100.0%
Total	3,084		3,597		513	16.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Census 2000; 2010 ACS 5-Yr Estimate

It is noted that comparing the total number of dwelling units for 2010 in tables 3.4 and 3.5 reveals a different number. This difference originates from the reporting method by the Census Bureau. In table 3.5, the 2010 dwelling units are an average number of units over a period of time, as opposed to the actual count data in table 3.4. The data for table 3.5 is only available from this source.

The change in the makeup of housing units is shown above in Table 3.5. Even though the total number of multi unit housing increased by 9.6%, the overall percentage of multi unit housing dropped from 12.9% to 12.1%. While the

single unit homes increased slightly in percentage points, they experienced the greatest increase in number of units.

As part of this planning effort, a land use survey of the City of Diamondhead was conducted. The methodology was such that planners drove every street in the city and observed the type of land use on each parcel of land. The use type was then recorded on paper maps during the survey and ultimately the data was entered into a GIS system for analysis. From this data, the current housing mix is measured as follows:

Single unit	3,676	82.6%
Multi-unit	661	14.9%
<u>Mfg. Home</u>	<u>113</u>	<u>2.5%</u>
Total	4,450	

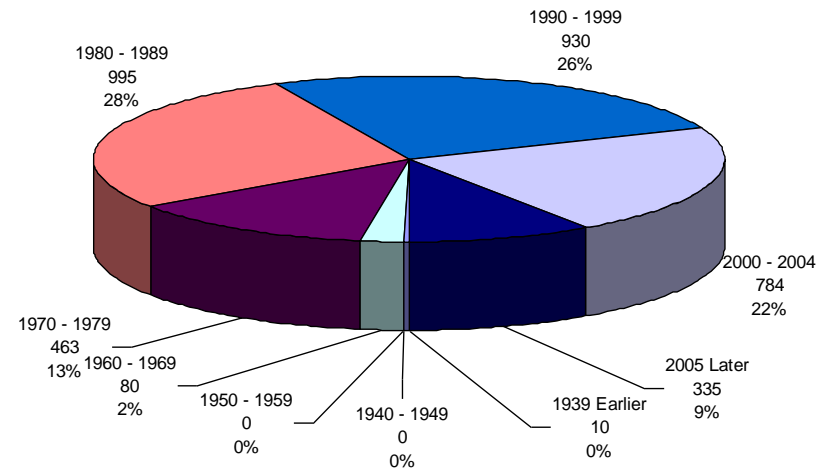
This data indicates the housing mix in Diamondhead has remained constant since 2000. Additionally, the data indicates growth in housing units since the conduct of the 2010 census. Although the economic conditions nationwide have dampened growth and development, it is likely that Diamondhead will continue to see growth.

As time progresses, the City should maintain a level of awareness related to an increasing amount of rental properties and the age of properties. The significance is that of property upkeep. Typically renters have less “pride of ownership” than do owners and are not compelled to see that property is maintained. Housing quality is a factor that has an impact on the community in terms of community appearance, property values, and overall quality of life. Presently, Diamondhead has exceptionally high quality housing stock. A survey of the city reveals only a few structures in need of significant repair or in a state of dilapidation.

In addition to property ownership influencing property maintenance, the age of housing does as well. Older housing usually requires a higher level of maintenance to keep it in good condition. The Census Bureau reports the “year structure built” in its decennial reports. The importance of this data is that it will demonstrate not only the age of housing but also the distribution by time period.

Figure 3.1 is a pie chart indicating the data reported by the Census Bureau with regard to the age of housing. From the data, it appears as though Diamondhead has developed at a reasonably steady pace beginning in the 1970’s. Although Diamondhead doesn’t have an extraordinarily high number of older homes, the City must remain aware of the fact that older housing requires continuous maintenance. In order to avoid the blighting effects of poor housing conditions, Diamondhead will at some point in the future have to intervene with a code enforcement program to require minimum levels of maintenance.

**FIGURE 3.1 Year Structure Built**



## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Information on educational attainment is presented in Table 3.6 for Diamondhead, Hancock County, and the State of Mississippi. In reading Table 3.6 it is important to understand the data rows. The row labeled “High School Graduates” includes the population that has achieved only a high school education (college educated persons also have a high school education).

**TABLE 3.6 Educational Attainment for Diamondhead, Hancock County, and State of Mississippi.** Totals represent the population 25 years old and older.

2000	Diamondhead		Hancock County		Mississippi	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Less than 9th grade	97	2.12%	2,264	7.85%	169,178	9.63%
9th to 12th, no diploma	262	5.73%	4,122	14.29%	307,852	17.52%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	1,041	22.77%	8,450	29.30%	516,091	29.36%
Some college, no degree	1,392	30.45%	7,133	24.73%	366,744	20.87%
Associates degree	258	5.64%	1,893	6.56%	100,561	5.72%
Bachelor's degree	1,033	22.59%	3,130	10.85%	194,325	11.06%
Grad. or prof. degree	489	10.70%	1,848	6.41%	102,766	5.85%
Total pop. 25 yrs and older	4,572		28,840		1,757,517	
2010	Diamondhead		Hancock County		Mississippi	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Less than 9th grade	12	0.20%	1,756	6.10%	135,124	7.20%
9th to 12th, no diploma	195	3.30%	3,052	10.60%	247,727	13.20%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	1,468	24.90%	9,070	31.50%	73,192	3.90%
Some college, no degree	1,191	20.20%	6,392	22.20%	407,248	21.70%
Associates degree	389	6.60%	2,246	7.80%	142,631	7.60%
Bachelor's degree	1,650	28.00%	4,060	14.10%	236,467	12.60%
Grad. or prof. degree	990	16.80%	2,188	7.60%	127,617	6.80%
Total pop. 25 yrs and older	5,894		28,793		1,876,719	

Source: US Census Bureau 2000 Summary Tape File; US Census Bureau 2010 ACS 5-Year Estimates.

As can be seen in Table 3.6, a greater proportion of Diamondhead's population has higher education when compared to the countywide or statewide population. In Diamondhead, those holding a bachelor's degree or higher are twice as many in proportion compared to the county and state.

The education level of the area's population will have an impact on the types of employers that seek to draw upon the local labor pool. Likewise, income

levels will be commensurate with education levels, which is a factor considered by retailers and others seeking to capture a share of household disposable income.

Income levels in Diamondhead are higher than the county and state. Table 3.7 reveals a significant gap between the income levels of Diamondhead, Hancock County and the State of Mississippi. This gap is likely a product of the higher education levels of Diamondhead and the number of retired professionals in the community.

**TABLE 3.7 Income Levels for Diamondhead, Hancock County and Mississippi**

	Diamondhead		Growth	
	2000	2010	No.	%
Median Hshld Income	\$51,361	\$63,914	\$12,553	24%
Median Family Income	\$58,533	\$68,472	\$9,939	17%
Per Capita Income	\$26,631	\$30,675	\$4,044	15%
	Hancock County			
	2000	2010		
Median Hshld Income	\$35,202	\$44,949	\$9,292	26%
Median Family Income	\$40,307	\$51,659	\$11,352	28%
Per Capita Income	\$17,748	\$21,935	\$4,187	24%
	Mississippi			
	2000	2010		
Median Hshld Income	\$31,330	\$37,881	\$6,551	21%
Median Family Income	\$37,406	\$47,031	\$9,625	26%
Per Capita Income	\$15,853	\$19,977	\$4,124	26%

Source: U S. Census Bureau for years noted.

## EMPLOYMENT BASE

Economic analysis is difficult for smaller levels of geography such as cities and towns. Data is compiled by various agencies at larger levels of geography such as counties, metropolitan areas, and states. For the purposes of



developing this plan, substantial amounts of economic data are not necessary due to the unique nature of Diamondhead.

Diamondhead is commonly known as a retirement community and the demographic statistics support its reputation. Although the city is substantial in its number of persons, there is a very limited commercial base located around the interchange.

As a retirement community, job availability wouldn't seem to be an item of significance. However, as the community transitions to a somewhat younger population, job availability will become important. Even though Diamondhead is part of a regional economy, job availability "close to home" is a desirable characteristic for a community.

As part of the regional economy, many of those residing within Diamondhead seek employment in some other place. Data reported by the Census Bureau indicates that a substantial portion of Diamondhead's population seeks employment somewhere outside the Diamondhead. From Table 3.8 only 19.7% of Diamondhead's resident population was employed within Diamondhead.

**TABLE 3.8 Place of Work - Diamondhead Based on Working Population 16 Years and Older**

	2000		2010	
	Number	% total	Number	% total
Working Population 16 years+	2,265	100%	3,270	100%
Work within Diamondhead	478	21.1%	645	19.7%
Work outside of Diamondhead:				
Elsewhere in Hancock County	600	26.5%	1,095	33.5%
Outside Hancock County	1,187	52.4%	1,530	46.8%

*Source: U. S. Census Bureau for years noted*

## SUMMARY

Diamondhead is a successful community experiencing substantial growth in its population base. This growth is expected to continue and give rise to additional non-residential development. As a newly incorporated city,

Diamondhead has the challenge of trying to balance the traditional residential development pattern with the market pressure for economic development. As the community grows, both economically and residentially, Diamondhead will likely experience growing pains.

## POPULATION AND HOUSING FORECAST

Having looked into the profile of Diamondhead, a picture of the future must now be created. Calculating the expected population and housing needs are particularly important components of the comprehensive plan. Comprehensive planning is in large part based on the physical environment. A community's population and its needs form a majority of the physical requirements of the built environment.

The population and housing forecast are difficult to compute with any degree of certainty due to recent events affecting the state of the economy. Although Diamondhead has seen some growth, it is unknown if any significant level of construction and development will continue. The duration of the economic slump is unknown; however, for planning purposes historic trends are utilized to project the future.

Table 3.9 shows the projection of Diamondhead's population and housing units under the continuation of current trends. The following projections for Diamondhead's population and housing are also based upon linear trends of historical data, including the 2010 census for population.

SEE FOLLOWING PAGE

**Table 3.9 Diamondhead Population and Housing Changes**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Population Increase</u>	<u>Housing</u>	<u>Housing Increase</u>
1990	2,661		1,871	
2000	5,912	3,251	3,084	1,213
2010	8,425	2,513	4,308	1,224
2020	11,430	3,005	5,525	1,217
2030	14,312	2,882	6,743	1,219

*Source: US Census Bureau for 1990, 2000, 2010; Bridge & Watson, Inc. Projections for 2020, 2030*

These projections reveal that Diamondhead should increase by roughly 1,200 housing units per decade, if past trends continue. However, one must recognize that Diamondhead is a fairly young community and has enjoyed a certain momentum of “new” development. The community, however, is approaching a certain level of buildout and as land resources become depleted, growth will slow. It is entirely possible the above projections will not occur when limited by the current corporate limits and land resources therein. Because of these unknowns, the comprehensive plan should be reviewed periodically (every 5 years or so) to adjust for any unexpected changes or new data availability.

Along with the increase in population, Diamondhead should seek to increase employment opportunities as well. Utilizing data from the 2010 Census, Diamondhead residents employed within the City of Diamondhead represents approximately 21% of the City’s population that works inside the city limits. Applying this same percentage to the expected population increase, there will need to be an additional 2,542 jobs located within the City available to City residents by 2030. It is important to note that the employed labor force includes persons sixteen years of age and older.

## CHAPTER 4. EXISTING LAND USE PATTERNS AND FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The purpose of this chapter is to identify existing land use patterns by preparing an inventory of existing land uses in map form, which in turn aids in developing goals and objectives for future land use patterns. By predefining future land use patterns, city officials and the community will have a guide over which to focus and direct future development. The future land use plan serves as a guide that literally maps out the general location and relationship of land uses.

### EXISTING LAND USE

A land use survey for the city of Diamondhead and the planning area was conducted in February 2012. This “windshield” survey allowed data to be recorded on tax maps with underlying aerial photography. A digital parcel map was created using a Geographic Information System (GIS), and each parcel coded for its particular land use.

The existing land uses are divided into the following described categories:

#### Residential

Single Family Residential - A single residential living unit of conventional (on-site) construction, designed to house only one family. These are “stand alone” units, opposed to townhomes or row houses.

Multifamily Residential – A structure designed with more than one separate living unit, such as a duplex or apartment complex, where such living units are attached.

Mobile Home Residential – A single residential living unit designed to house only one family and constructed or assembled off-site and transported to the site for placement.

#### Commercial

Commercial establishments are considered to be those that are operated privately, for profit, and provide merchandise or services for retail trade. Examples include banks, grocery stores, barber shops, etc. Also, medical facilities and professional offices are included in the commercial category.

#### Industrial

Industrial establishments are considered to be those that are operated privately, for profit, and engage in manufacturing, reduction, warehousing, storage, or distribution of products or goods. Also included in this category are uses that may generate substantial amounts of noise, odor, light, traffic or other nuisances associated with industrial uses. At the time of this survey, Diamondhead had no industrial land uses.

#### Public/Semi-Public

Uses that are operated primarily for the purpose of providing a public service or delivering a public utility, such as a fire station, post office or electric power sub station. This also includes non-profit organizations such as churches and cemeteries. Included in this category are facilities such of the POA.

#### Institutional

Institutional uses are operated by a public or non-profit body and that involves the frequent assembly or housing of persons, such as a school, hospital or prison.

#### Vacant Lands

Vacant lands are classified by the absence of an obvious urban use. Property lying void of any urban use can certainly be said to serve a nature related use, but are nonetheless considered vacant in this study. Properties utilized for agricultural purposes are considered vacant for the purpose of this study.

#### Marsh Areas

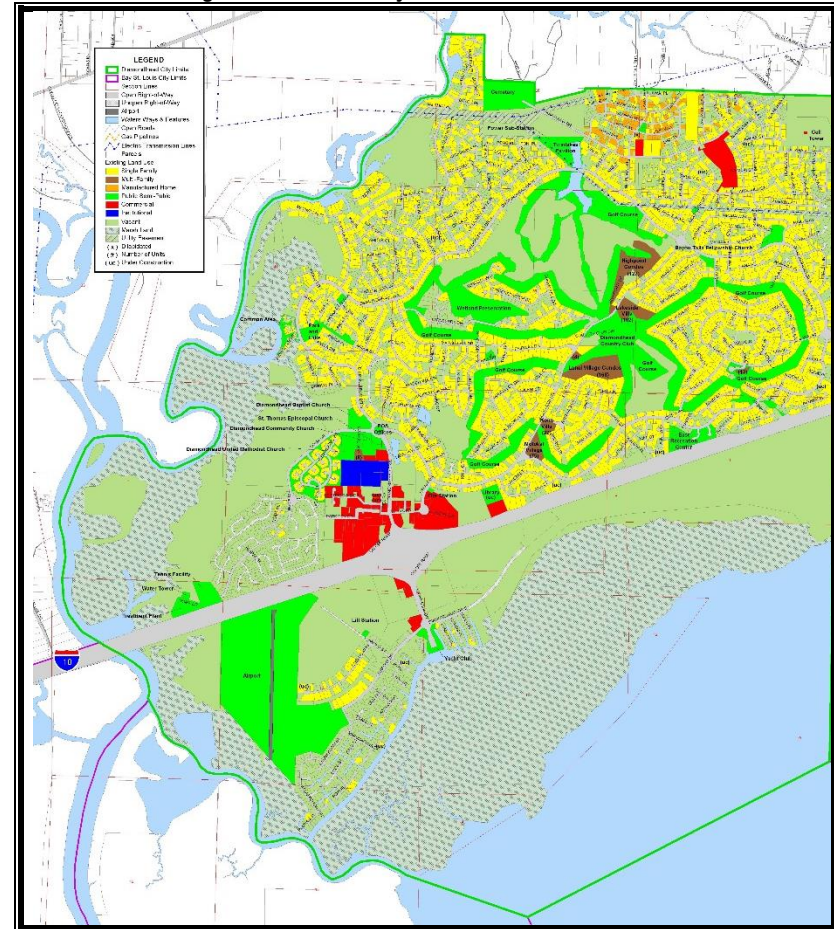
Areas lying along the water bodies which may be vegetated or non vegetated and subject to inundation. These areas are generally not accessible and not conducive to supporting development.

## Streets and ROW / Easements

This category is set aside to account for those corridors necessary for transportation routes or utility lines. Although in some instances there may be nothing visible on an easement, the property is set aside for a specific use.

The spatial arrangement of the existing land uses for the City of Diamondhead is shown on Map 4.1. Observing existing land use provides some insight toward the development of the future land use plan and policies regarding land use management.

**MAP 4.1 Existing Land Use For City Of Diamondhead**



Source: Hancock County GIS Depts.; MARIS (MSTM) data; Land Use Field Survey February 2012; FEMA DFIRM data for Hancock County

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

The City of Diamondhead is its infancy, having incorporated on January 30, 2012. The community of Diamondhead, on the other hand, began development as a master planned community *circa* 1970. Since its inception,

Diamondhead has developed in accordance with a specific plan addressing the use of lots, setbacks, minimum square footage of homes, and even architectural guidelines. The community master plan included many aspects other than home sites. It provided for public spaces and a multitude of amenities favored by retirees.

The City of Diamondhead desires to institute and enforce planning and zoning within its city limits consistent with the development patterns and neighborhood characteristics which are already well established. The first step will be the adoption of a comprehensive plan followed by the adoption of zoning and other ordinances. Through the continued application of planning and zoning the City aspires to continue a development pattern of organized residential uses with associated public facilities and attractive commercial uses.

## **FUTURE LAND USE PLAN**

### **Introduction and Methodology**

In order to comply with Mississippi enabling legislation, the future land use plan must designate in map or policy form the proposed general distribution and extent of the proposed land uses. Additionally, the meaning of land use codes must be provided.

The future land use plan serves two purposes. First, it provides for the general physical location of expected future development. The second purpose is to create order among the existing land uses.

In preparing a Future Land Use Plan, a necessary and responsible step is that of considering environmentally sensitive areas. These areas are not only worthy of some degree of preservation, but also pose a constraint to development.

### **Environmental Constraints**

Responsible planning dictates that the natural environment be planned just as the man-made environment is planned. The following discussion outlines the importance of certain environmental elements.

However, the City fully recognizes that even though some properties are environmentally constrained, necessity and market forces due to locational characteristics may warrant some level of development of constrained areas. For example, marine based industrial opportunities may by virtue of their operations need to locate at the waters edge in constrained areas.

### **Septic Tank Suitability**

Diamondhead and Hancock County are made up of numerous types of soil. Each soil is unique in terms of its physical and chemical characteristics. Because of these differing characteristics, some soils may not be very well suited to properly disposing of sewage through on-site methods.

Diamondhead is served by a central sewer collection and treatment system<sup>8</sup>, with sewage collection lines distributed throughout the entire Planning Area. The improper disposal of sewage poses a threat to both ground water supplies and surface waters. Soils that allow wastewater to permeate through too quickly fail to filter out pollutants. Eventually, these pollutants make their way into the ground water supplies. At the opposite end of the spectrum, some soils do not allow wastewater to permeate through quickly enough. When wastewater is generated faster than the soil can absorb it, the excess then is forced to the surface. Ultimately, the pollutants are washed away and become part of a body of surface water. If humans come into contact with improperly treated sewage, diseases such as hepatitis could be contracted.




The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) classifies soils based upon many factors, including their capability to accommodate on site wastewater disposal. There are three classifications of soils according to the

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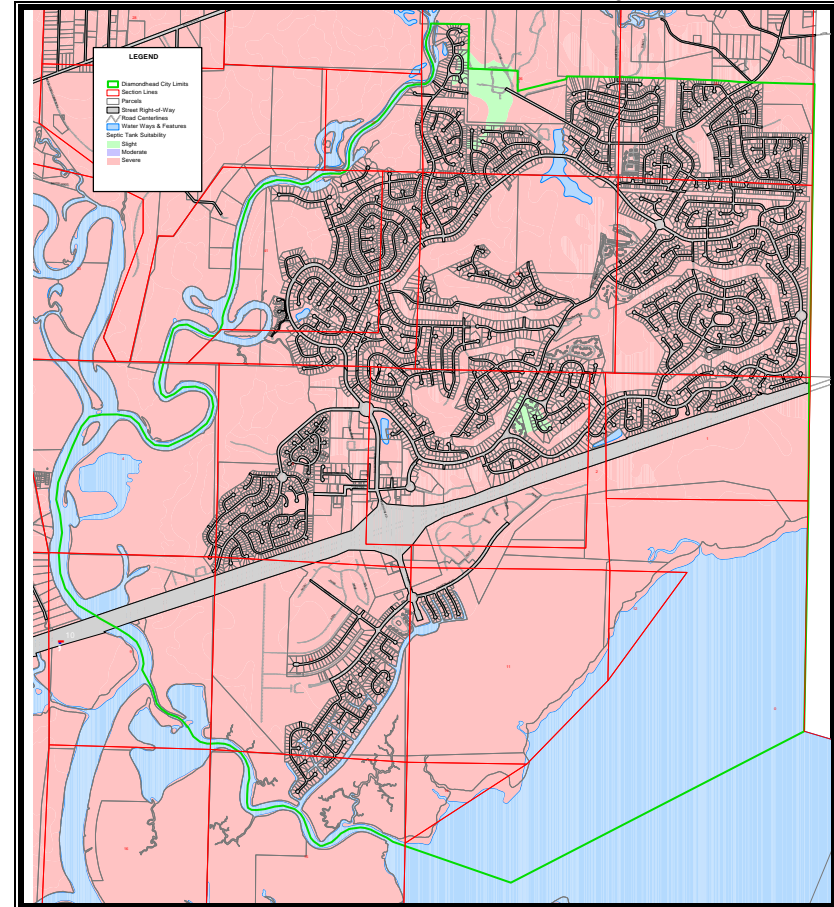
<sup>8</sup> Treatment facilities are provided by the Diamondhead Water and Sewer District.

USDA: Slight, Moderate, and Severe. These soils types are defined in Table 4.1. The location of the different soils types related to wastewater disposal, as they occur within the city and planning area, is set forth in Map 4.2

**Table 4.1 Definitions of Soils Type**

Soil Type	Symbol	Definition
Sight		Soil properties and site features are generally favorable for on site disposal and limitations are minor and easily overcome.
Moderate		Soil properties or site features can be overcome or modified with planning, design or special maintenance. None of this classification exists in Diamondhead.
Severe		Soil properties or site features are so unfavorable or so difficult to overcome that special design, significant increases in construction costs, and possibly increased maintenance are required.

**MAP 4.2 Septic Tanks Suitability.** The constraints on septic tank usage are as follows: Red is Severe; Yellow is Moderate; and Green is Slight.



Source: Hancock County GIS Dept.; U.S. Census Bureau 2010 TIGER Data; U.S. Dept. of Agriculture; MARIS (MSTM) data

Significant portions of the planning area are severely unsuitable for on-site sewage disposal systems. Although developed portions of the city utilize central sewer, future development (in areas where utility lines do not yet exist) should be required to connect to central sewer.

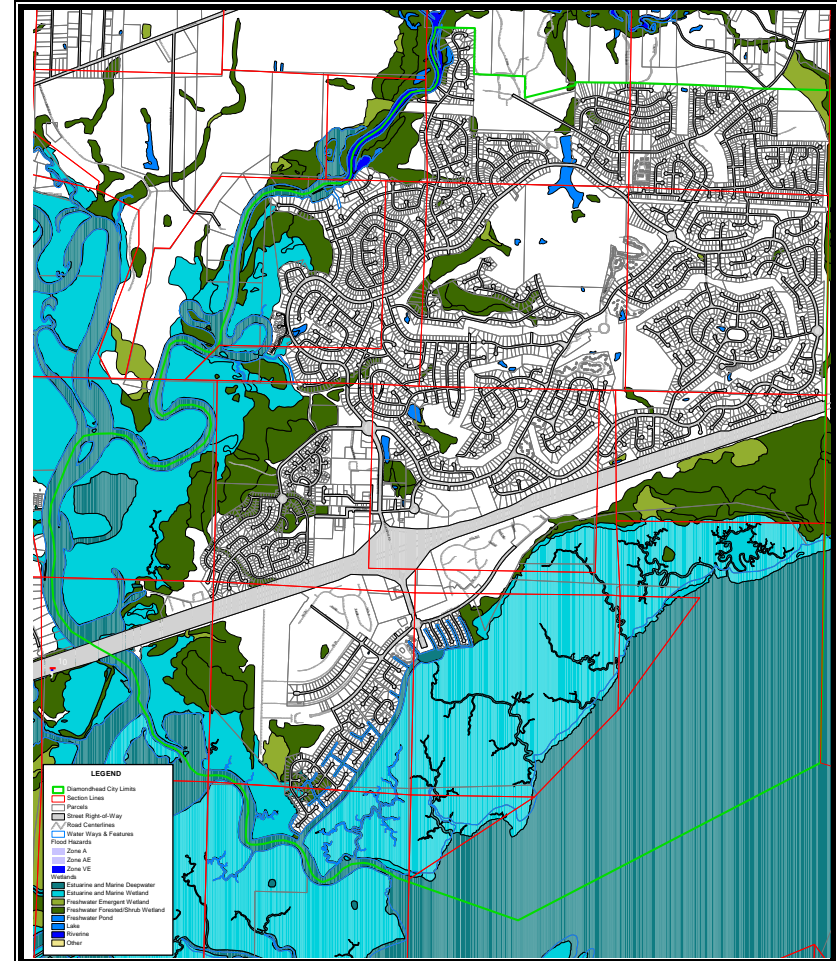


### Wetlands

The low lying coastal lands have many pockets of areas designated as wetlands or potential wetlands. These wetlands pose a constraint to development as they are protected by law. Limited development may occur in these areas through the appropriate permitting and mitigation procedures with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. Development is not encouraged in wetland areas. Map 4.3 indicates the location of the various types of wetland in Diamondhead. Diamondhead contains both fresh and salt water wetlands.

**MAP 4.3 Wetland Areas.**

*The blue-gray areas are hydric and support wetlands.*



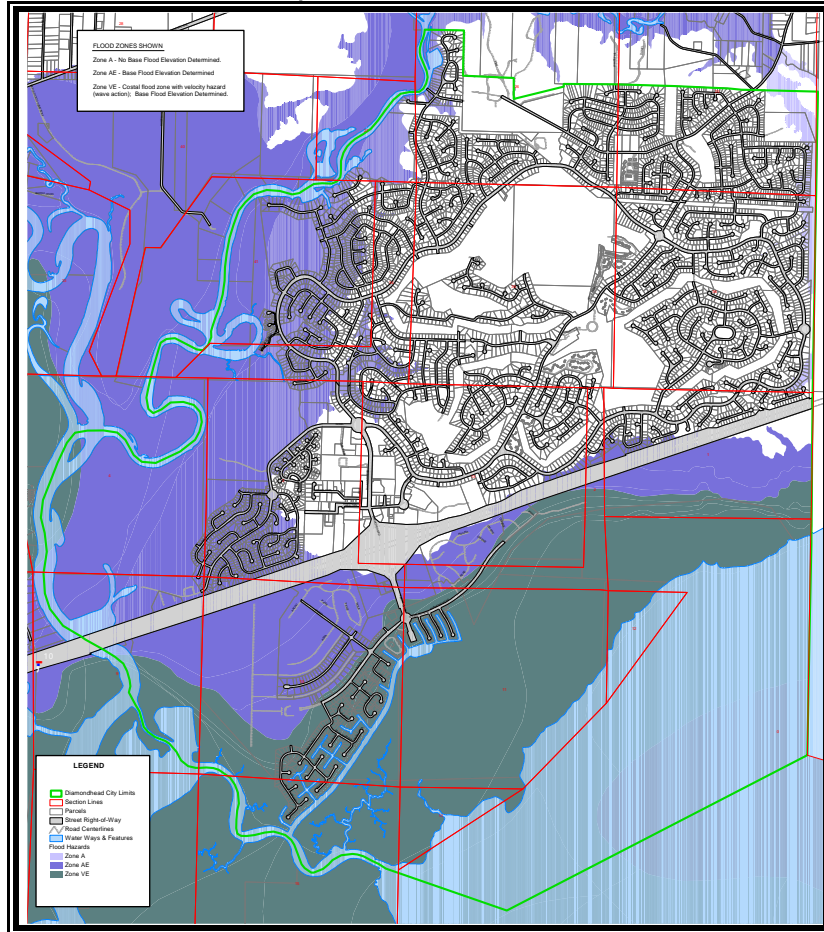
Source: Hancock County GIS Department; MARIS (MSTM) data; U.S. Census 2010 TIGER Files; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

### Flood Hazard Areas

Flood hazard areas are a constraint to urban development. No doubt Hurricane Katrina has opened the eyes of many with regard to the devastating

effects of flood waters. Since the Hurricane, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has revised the flood maps. Map 4.4 sets out the limits of flood hazard areas as reported by the federal government.

**MAP 4.4 Flood Hazard Map.**



Source: Hancock County GIS Dept.; MARIS (MSTM) data; FEMA DFIRM Data for Hancock County

### Noise / Height Limitations

The Diamondhead Airport is located in the southwest corner of the city on the south side of Interstate 10. Although the airport is a private facility, it must comply with all Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) guidelines. Part of the FAA requirements relates to the allowable height of structures within the approach vectors of runways. As development proposals arise, city officials should evaluate the proposal for compliance with height limitations and the impact noise from the airport would have on the development.

Noise and other environmental conditions from land uses can become a constraint to new development and a nuisance to existing development. Particularly, land uses which generate excessive noise, odor, light or traffic, for example, should be located and designed such that these negative characteristics do not impact existing or proposed development, whether it be residential or non-residential.

### Projected Land Use Needs

From the population and dwelling unit projections, the City of Diamondhead and the study area are calculated to increase in the number of dwelling units by some 2,435 by the year 2030. At the same time, population could increase by 5,887 persons. Although it is unknown if these projections will be realized, these figures are utilized for planning purposes as they represent past trends.

The future land use plan is designed to indicate the general location of anticipated future land uses. Contained within the future land use plan are various categories of land uses described as follows:

### Preservation Areas

This land use classification represents properties which are currently utilized for preservation purposes such as wetland mitigation areas as well as areas that because of environmental constraints are likely to remain vacant. This includes the marsh areas adjacent to the Bay of St. Louis and those areas adjoining the river along the western edge of the city. These areas should remain vacant until such time as it is shown that market forces, locational characteristics, or other factors make the development of preservation areas



a necessity. An example of locational characteristics that could influence the developability of preservation areas is the legal limitations or requirements for the location of gaming establishments (in proximity to water).

If development of these areas does become a reality, consideration should be given to site design and layout. The project should be configured to minimize the amount of land consumed within the preservation area and to minimize the overall environmental impact of the project.

### **Residential Land Uses in General**

Diamondhead has achieved a high level of build out before incorporating as a municipality. The Future Land Use Plan is intended to prescribe residential land uses in a manner consistent with the existing development and in conformance with the provisions of the covenants. Therefore, the following subcategories of residential uses are quite limited in terms of development provisions, as are the covenants.

The Diamondhead covenants also specify minimum square footage requirements for residential structures. Although the specific requirements are not set forth below, it is the intent and desire of the City of Diamondhead that such minimums be incorporated into the land use regulating program to achieve uniformity in the size of homes as the community continues to build out.

Because of the compact nature of Diamondhead, any newly developed residential areas will, by necessity, be in close proximity to existing residential area. New development is intended to adhere to the same standards and requirements to ensure continuity throughout the community.

### **Low Density Residential**

This land use category is intended to preserve existing concentrations of residential development that has occurred on larger lots within Diamondhead. These areas are well established and the character of the neighborhood is easily discernable. This category also allows for additional residential development in the form of single family detached units at net densities of

approximately three (3) to four (4) dwellings per acre and in accordance with the minimum square footage requirements of the covenants.

### **Medium Density Residential**

This land use category is intended to preserve existing concentrations of residential development that has occurred on mid size lots within Diamondhead. These areas are well established and the character of the neighborhood is easily discernable. This classification will allow single family detached residential development at net densities of four (4) to seven (7) dwellings per acre, and is intended to allow for single family detached housing. New development is expected to occur in a manner consistent with the existing neighborhood, including the minimum square footage requirements of the covenants.

### **High Density Single Family Residential**

This land use classification is intended to accommodate single family housing at a maximum density of eight and one-half (8.5) dwellings per acre. It is anticipated that single family development in the form of both attached and detached housing would be appropriate in these locations. Examples of the type of housing include single family homes, town homes and patio homes. Condominium ownership patterns would be appropriate within these areas. Because of the concentration of population in high density areas, more traffic is expected and therefore these areas should develop in close proximity to collector level or higher transportation routes. Further, these high density areas should be dispersed throughout the community to avoid over concentrations of population and afford residents various level of proximity to amenities throughout the community.

### **High Density Multi Family Residential**

This land use classification is intended to accommodate multifamily housing at densities of up to twenty (20) dwellings per acre. Because of the concentration of population in high density areas, these areas should be located more conveniently (smaller travel time and distance) to the every day needs of the residents of these areas, and should have direct access or be within close proximity to collector level or higher transportation routes.

Housing types within this land use category include single family homes, town homes and patio homes and apartment buildings. Condominium ownership patterns would be appropriate within these areas as well as renter occupancy.

### **Manufactured Housing**

The manufactured housing district is created to provide an area to accommodate manufactured or modular type home construction at a maximum net density of eight (8) units per acre. Because of the distinct architectural appearance of the manufactured and modular homes, they do not typically blend well with conventionally constructed homes. This use is located in and around areas where manufactured housing has already accumulated.

### **Commercial**

This land use category is designed to accommodate commercial uses conducted either indoors or outdoors and located in areas where business proprietors require high visibility or are dependent upon traffic volume as a portion of its market base. This area is expected to contain lower intensity uses designed to serve the needs of the residents of the community, in contrast to larger scale commercial uses anticipated in the interstate commercial / gaming / resort area. In areas adjacent to the interchange and I-10, limited uses designed to serve the traveling public would be appropriate such as hotels, convenience stores, restaurants and similar uses. Other uses located more internal to this district would include a wide variety of retail and service establishments.

### **Interstate Commercial / Gaming / Resort Area**

The City of Diamondhead is situated on the north shore of the Bay of St. Louis. Its geographic location provides the opportunity to attract and participate in one of Mississippi's newest industries – casino gaming. State law limits where gaming facilities can locate.

Diamondhead has property within its corporate limits that appears to be eligible for gaming purposes, along with associated commercial and other uses that accompany gaming. Set forth on the future land use map is an area lying at the interchange and sandwiched between the Bay of St. Louis and the interstate, and extending east to the city limits. This area is situated in proximity to potential eligible gaming area and transportation routes such that gaming and other commercial uses would be appropriate given the location. Likewise, land uses associated with gaming such as hotels, restaurants, shopping, entertainment and other resort related uses would be appropriate in this area.

Adjacent to the area described above, there are residential properties that, although protected by covenants, need particular attention in this plan. Specifically, these residential properties are those that front along the East side of Akoko Street North of Airport Drive; those that front along the North side of Airport Drive East of Akoko Street to Yacht Club Drive; and the Harbor House area. These particular residential areas are shown on the Future Land Use Plan as continuing as residential properties, and as long as the protective covenants remain in place residential uses are a reasonable expectation for the properties.

However, the City of Diamondhead recognizes that these particular residential properties could be appropriately developed for nonresidential uses given their location, and should the protective covenants expire or are otherwise removed<sup>9</sup> the City of Diamondhead should revisit this Comprehensive Plan and modify it according to the circumstances existing at that time. Because these particular residential properties form a gateway to a larger residential area lying to the west, the City should consider preparing a detailed conceptual plan demonstrating how the development of these areas could occur. If the covenants are removed or expire these particular residential properties could develop in a manner consistent with the provisions of the interstate commercial / gaming / resort area.

As development is proposed within the interstate commercial / gaming / resort areas, careful consideration should be given to transportation and access.

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<sup>9</sup> There is presently litigation concerning Harbor House. The future of the covenants is unknown to the City of Diamondhead.

Much of the area designated as interstate commercial / gaming / resort areas have no access. Intense development of this entire area could easily overload the capacity of the existing interchange. As this area develops, an access to the next (eastern) interchange or other suitable roadway to disperse traffic flow should be considered.

Great care and consideration must be given to site design of development within this area. Having the potential to become a significant commercial and gaming area, this area adjoins properties that were residential in nature before Katrina and have the potential to return to residential uses. Appropriate buffering will be needed.

Further, the land uses designated within this area would serve the purposes of significantly expanding the city's tax base if it develops to its full potential. The City of Diamondhead is limited in its supply of vacant land and limited in the areas available for expanded commercial development. The areas designated for this proposed land use are necessary to create land resources in the proper location to enable the city to enjoy the tax benefits of gaming and related development.

### **Buffer Areas**

Land use conflicts arise where dissimilar uses adjoin. This will be the case if gaming and commercial development occur south of I-10, and it will be the case as the commercial area north of I-10 continues to build out. To allow for an appropriate land use transition between commercial and residential areas, buffer areas or transitional uses are necessary.

Buffer Area 1 - South of I-10, it is expected that buffer areas will consist of landscaping to provide a separation of dissimilar land uses. The width and nature of the landscaping or other materials should be determined at the time of the commercialization and should be suitable to provide a meaningful separation or sense of separation between commercializing and residential areas.

Buffer Area 2 – One residential area south of I-10 has made admirable progress in recovering from the impact of Katrina, but lies directly in the path of potential commercialization. In anticipation of commercialization, buffering

is necessary and desirable to protect the residents. Currently, this area is in close proximity to the restaurant constructed at the site of the former yacht club. As commercialization continues, landscape buffers, setbacks, and appropriate design elements should be employed to provide a separation between existing residential and proposed non-residential uses. Care should be given to site layout such that areas near the existing residential development are utilized for less intense purposes and are more compatible in terms of architectural character and scale.

Buffer Area 3 - North of I-10, the commercial land uses are not expected to be as intense or as large in scale compared to the expected development south of I-10. Therefore, buffer areas may be limited to landscaping and extended setbacks to achieve both a visual separation as well as a sound barrier. Buffering is important in the development process to maintain and protect the integrity of the housing stock adjacent to non residential areas.

### **Industrial**

The industrial land use classification is designed to provide for areas suitable for industrial activities that are conducted primarily indoors, except for those uses which, out of necessity, must occur outdoors. Such activity will include manufacturing, storage or assembly of goods, or products or heavy repair. Industrial uses should not create excessive amounts of noise, odor, light, or other nuisances beyond the limits of its property line.

Because of the limited land use makeup within Diamondhead, there are no areas currently designated as industrial. The community has no known entities that engage in industrial type activities. Arguably, one could declare facilities such as the airport and sewage treatment facilities as being industrial.

The future land use plan does not designate any industrial areas within the city; however, conditions and opportunities in the city certainly can change. The potential development of some type of industrial use, particularly related to the city's proximity to water, does exist. At the time such opportunities arise, appropriate amendments to this plan should be considered.

### Public Facilities and Recreation

This classification is intended to reflect the location of existing and/or proposed uses such as churches and cemeteries, educational facilities, and community service facilities. The future land use plan does not designate each and every public/semi-public use whereas many such uses occur as an incidental development to other uses, such as a small park within a new residential area. Therefore, this land use designation is not intended to become a separate zoning classification.

### Flood Hazard Areas

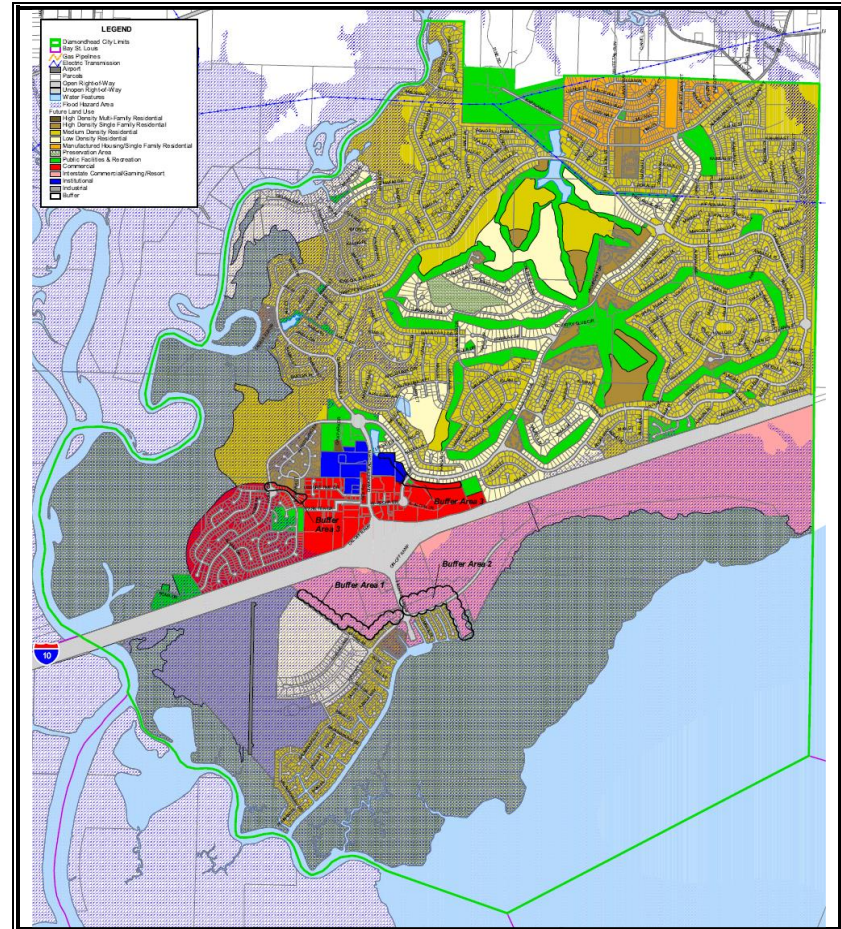
The flood plain district is an overlay district outlining the low lying areas within the community which are subject to flooding in the event of a 100-yr. storm (1% chance of flooding). Logic would dictate that development should not occur within flood hazard areas.

Although contrary to this logic, waterfront development is an important piece of Diamondhead's history, and will be an important component of future development of the city. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, Diamondhead had an active marina surrounded by residential development. While the marina is functioning again, the surrounding residential area is slowly recovering.

### Future Land Use Map

The future land use map designates the type and extent of development which is desired for the city. Map 4.5 sets out in general form the spatial arrangement of future land uses for Diamondhead.

**MAP 4.5 Diamondhead Future Land Use Plan**



Source: Hancock County GIS Dept.; US Fish and Wild Life Service; FEMA DFIRM data published Oct 16, 2009; Bridge & Watson, Inc.

### Land Supply

The land use survey discussed previously allows a quantification of the land uses within the city, as well as the vacant lands. The importance of this type of analysis is for the determination of space needs to accommodate expected

development. Within the City of Diamondhead, land is utilized as set forth in Table 4.2.

**TABLE 4.2 Land Use Tabulations for City of Diamondhead**

Land Use	Acres	% Land Area	% Dev. Land
City Limits	7,870.4		
Water Areas	1,405.8		
Mash Land Areas	1,498.5		
Resulting Land Area	4,966.1	100.0%	
Single Family	1,184.0	23.8%	42.2%
Multi-Family	50.5	1.0%	1.8%
Manufactured Homes	31.3	0.6%	1.1%
Commercial	99.9	2.0%	3.6%
Industrial	0.0	0.0%	0.0%
Institutional	18.9	0.4%	0.7%
Public / Semi-public	677.1	13.6%	24.1%
Right-of-Way	696.7	14.0%	24.8%
Utility Easements	46.4	0.9%	1.7%
Total Developed Land	2,804.7	56.5%	
Vacant Land (Total)	2,127.0	42.8%	
Floodway and Floodplain	1,336.5	26.9%	
Unopened ROW	34.8	0.7%	
Vacant Unconstrained Land	755.7	15.2%	

*Source: Bridge & Watson, Inc. field survey of February 2012*

Although the little over 2,100 vacant acres within the city seems like a great deal of land available for development, just over 1,300 acres of that land are constrained by floodway and floodplain development requirements. Of the vacant unconstrained land, much is in the form of vacant individual lots distributed throughout the community. There are approximately 2,700 vacant lots within the city, which would accommodate infill development.

Of these 2,700 vacant lots, 1,311 are free from the constraint of the flood zone but some are constrained from development due to reasons that have not been identified. For example, some of these lots are bisected by drainage ways or have topographical features that cause them to be less attractive for development. Based on the projected housing demand, the number of vacant lots would appear to accommodate the growth for about a decade, assuming all housing units were single family units. This, however, is not a realistic expectation.

Citywide, there remains only 755 acres or 15.2% of the city's land area that is vacant and free from known development constraints. This represents a very low supply of vacant land available to accommodate new development. As time and development progress, the city will need to consider expanding the city limits to increase the supply of vacant land, and ensure that existing neighborhoods remain stable and desirable to avoid a potential erosion of the city's tax base and quality of life.

The land use assignments and density levels described in the future land use plan will not accommodate the projected growth. As configured, the future land use plan will accommodate approximately 7,371 additional housing units, if the city achieved 100% buildout. This would also include development of every vacant lot in the city and the development of constrained lands. Buildout at this level is not a realistic expectation, and the future land use plan will accommodate only a small fraction of its mathematical maximum of 7,371 units. In reality, the growth projections will not bear true due to the lack of land availability, a self-limiting growth factor.

In an effort to overcome this limitation, Diamondhead will have to increase its supply of vacant land through annexation.

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## **CHAPTER 5. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Since incorporation, the City of Diamondhead has begun the process of maturing into a city which will provide a wide range of community services and facilities. As Diamondhead grows and expands, there will be increased demands for community facilities and services. This portion of the Comprehensive Plan identifies existing facilities and services in terms of current needs and seeks to quantify future needs based on expected population growth.

As a newly incorporated municipality, Diamondhead finds itself at somewhat of an awkward stage of development. City leaders desire to provide high levels of service to the residents of the city, but the city has limited funds and is in the process of developing its organizational structure and hiring key employees.

Along the lines of community facilities and services, Diamondhead is unique. In fact, the community of Diamondhead (prior to incorporation) has been described as operating as a small town<sup>10</sup>. Presently within the city there are a variety of entities providing municipal related services such as:

- The Diamondhead Fire District provides fire protection.
- The Diamondhead Water and Sewer District provides water and sewer services.
- The Property Owners Association provides street maintenance, security and recreational facilities.
- Hancock County provides the library facility.

Regardless of the service provider, the important thing to consider regarding community services is whether or not service needs are being met and provided at a reasonable cost to taxpayers or rate payers. Intertwined among this equation are issues such as efficiency and compatibility of the various facets of the supporting infrastructure to deliver municipal services.

Diamondhead appears to be well served with regard to the quality and adequacy of the various services and facilities within the community. Given the past success enjoyed by this community, there must be some level of collaboration among the various service providers. With a new entity now in place, the collaborative efforts must be expanded to include the City.

From a long term perspective, the City of Diamondhead and the various service providers therein must continually seek to determine if services and facilities within the city are good and adequate, or are the best possible. With services being provided from such a variety of entities, there is always a risk of “fragmentation” which should be avoided.

At some point, a collaborative effort must be made to determine if the community would be better served by a centralized provider – i.e. if the City took over responsibility of providing the various services throughout the community. An examination of this type would necessarily address any efficiency to be gained through a consolidation of services. Any such efficiency could be translated into savings to the customer, or enhancements to the program or facilities.

The fact that Diamondhead has successfully existed since the 1970's and is presently a well served community should not be a reason to avoid or ignore any potential benefits of service centralization. In fact, as of the drafting of this plan, an effort is underway to explore shifting certain services from the POA to the City.

### **CITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

As a newly incorporated city, Diamondhead has very little (thus far) in terms of city services. The City, however, is making great efforts to develop its departments and provide municipal level services to the residents and property owners of the city.

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<sup>10</sup> See Longanecker v Diamondhead, MS Supreme Court Case No. 1999-CA-00484-SCT

Although the city is just getting started, the community is not without services and facilities. The following identifies the community facilities and services within the city.

### **CITY ADMINISTRATION**

In only five months of operations, the City Council has laid the groundwork for developing city services. During this period, the Mayor and City Council have recruited volunteers to serve as city clerk, city manager, and city receptionist. Some of these positions have since been converted to paid employee status.

The Council has retained professional assistance with legal and planning matters and has undertaken the task of implementing its own planning and zoning program through the development of this plan. The city has also established election districts and appointed a planning commission to assist and advise with planning related matters.

City Hall is currently located within the Diamondhead Community Center building where the City is leasing the necessary office space from the POA.

### **CITY LIBRARY**

The City of Diamondhead is fortunate to be part of the Hancock County Library System. Currently, the County is constructing a library branch in Diamondhead on the east side of the commercial area on the north side of Interstate 10. The service area of the library includes the residents of the City of Diamondhead and its immediate environs. The library operations are supported financially through taxes paid by city property owners through Hancock County.

### **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

The Diamondhead Fire Department is a separate governmental entity established by the Hancock County Board of Supervisors under state law. As such, it holds the exclusive responsibility for fire protection within its

geographical boundaries. The city does not have any authority over the fire district but that should not stand in the way of a cooperative working relationship to deliver high quality services to the City.

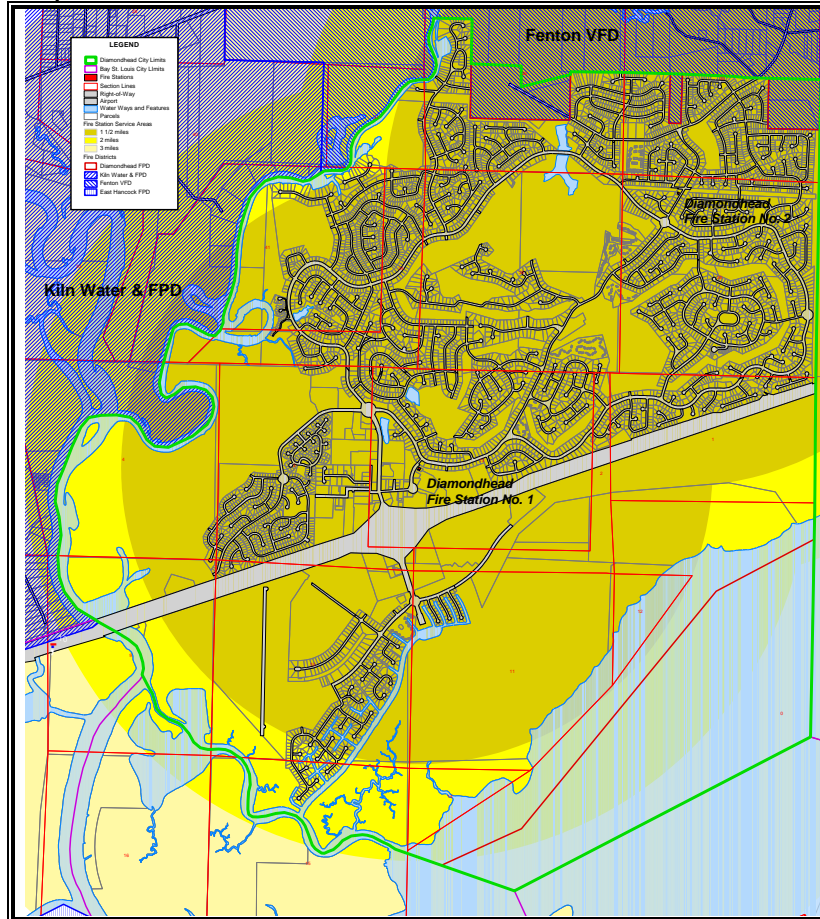
The Mississippi State Rating Bureau (MSRB) is a non-profit corporation that has leadership and membership comprised of the insurance companies that write fire protection policies. MSRB provides services related to the grading of public fire protection and services as the services relate to insurance rates in the state of Mississippi. MSRB has graded the Diamondhead Fire Department a Class 6 fire rating, effective September 2, 1993. The inspection system is based on a point schedule with credit given in several categories related to fire fighting and protecting property from fire damage. These categories include the age and capabilities of fire fighting equipment, the quantity of water available to fight fires, the number of firefighters responding as an average per call, the distance the fire fighting equipment must travel in order to reach a fire (run distance), fire department communications and code enforcement.

The present location of the fire stations, and the compact geographic configuration of the City, allows for relatively short run distances. From a scoring standpoint, the Mississippi State Rating Bureau requires the station to be within 1½ miles of developed commercial areas, 2.0 miles of densely developed residential areas and four miles of scattered residential development. The level of development expected to occur in Diamondhead should not demand an additional fire station, particularly if the city remains mindful of fire requirements when approving new developments. However, if the city were to expand its limits at some point, an additional fire station, equipment and personnel may be required to maintain the rating.

The service areas which could be handled by the existing fire stations are roughly represented by the distance rings shown in Map 5.1. Although the map utilizes concentric circles to demonstrate coverage areas, the true measure utilized by the MSRB is the actual travel distance.



**Map 5.1 Fire Station Service Areas.**



Source: Hancock County GIS Dept.; MARIS (MSTM) data; City of Diamondhead

## Long Term Fire Department Needs

The Diamondhead Fire Department will need to upgrade its fire protection equipment as time progresses. The MSRB will only recognize the duration of reliability of certain fire apparatus for rating purposes for only a limited time period (15 or 20 years depending on the model). The fire district will have to replace equipment over time in order to have the appropriate ratable

equipment to avoid endangering its fire rating. There may be other needs as well.

Improvements such as additional equipment and manpower could lead to an improved fire grading from a class 6 to a 5 (lower grade indicates better score in fire rating system). Lowering the fire rating can save some homeowners money on their home insurance, and it is a positive indicator for new business and industry seeking to locate in the city. To improve the fire rating, the fire district and City should develop a specific plan based upon the deficiencies cited by the MSRB, and then consult with the rating bureau before implementing the plan.

## POLICE DEPARTMENT

The City of Diamondhead currently does not have a police department. The residential portion of the city is provided security by the POA through a contract with a private security firm. Additionally, the Hancock County Sheriff's Department has jurisdiction within the city and also provides law enforcement services. It should be noted that a private security officer does not have the same legal authority as does a municipal police officer. As an example, the security patrol does not have the power to arrest or the authority to command motor vehicle operators to yield security officer commands.

Diamondhead security serves two primary roles: 1) enforce the rules promulgated by the POA, and 2) keep a close watch over the community. Violators are fined in accordance with a fee schedule adopted by the POA. Because of this arrangement, the payment of the fine is a contractual obligation. Although this fee structure technically applies to guests, it is unknown if all guests are properly registered in accordance with the covenants.

## Short Term Police Service Needs

The short term needs for police services can and are being met through an interlocal agreement with the Hancock County Sheriff's Department. As a result, the Sheriff's Department performs routine patrols through the City and

provides first response duties for emergency calls. However, under this arrangement the Sheriff can not utilize radar speed enforcement.

#### Long Term Police Service Needs

The City needs enhanced police protection and will more so if additional commercialization occurs. There are two options to meet the need. The City has two (2) options. The first is an extended interlocal agreement with the County such that the Sheriff oversees officers dedicated to protecting and serving Diamondhead. The second is the creation of a City Police Department fully staffed and equipped and administered by a city police chief.

Although during the incorporation process there were specific planning projections concerning the number of officers, patrol cars, etc., City officials must maintain a level of awareness regarding the level of crime and safety of the community. Police services should be provided accordingly.

### **PARK AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

Diamondhead POA currently owns and operates a comprehensive system of park and recreational facilities including the airport, community parks, baseball fields, tennis courts, golf courses and a marina. The POA currently has covenants in place to oversee these amenities that are set to expire in 2020. At that time, the City could seek to acquire some or all of the amenities. Also, the desires of the citizens of Diamondhead concerning the matter should be used as a guide for determining the fate of recreational facilities.

The following list from the 2007 Incorporation Study<sup>11</sup> identifies a number of reasons why the parks and recreational system should remain private:

- *Under private ownership, the POA may impose greater restrictions than a city regarding use and access.*
- *There are user fees associated with many of the recreational facilities, which means the funding for facility upkeep is provided by*

*the facility users, as opposed to being spread across an entire tax base.*

- *According to budget figures, some recreational facilities operate as bona fide businesses and generate a profit. This profitability goes toward the support of the facility and aids in keeping costs down. Municipalities do not have the authority to operate these facilities in the same manner as the POA (in theory, if it is profitable the user fees are too high).*

If the City should decide to take on the parks and recreational facilities, the City will need to budget the funds to hire a parks staff, purchase maintenance equipment, and the eventual replacement of equipment.

The City will have to ensure that the parks and open space within the City are in accordance with prototype standards such as those specified in the Mississippi State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). This will insure that the long-range open space and recreational needs of the citizens of Diamondhead are met. The SCORP contains standards that are based upon acres or parks and facilities needed for every 1,000 persons. However, these standards are guidelines intended to direct future growth and are not absolute rules that must be adhered to.

### **DIAMONDHEAD POA FACILITIES**

The Diamondhead POA maintains various facilities that can be used by the citizens of Diamondhead. These facilities include the following:

- Diamondhead County Club with 5,400 square feet of meeting/banquet space
- 2 – 18 Hole Golf Courses
- 8 – Lighted Tennis Courts
- Swimming Pools
- Recreation Areas including walking paths and athletic fields
- Marina with boat storage and access to the Bay of St. Louis

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<sup>11</sup> A Recommended Course of Action for the Protection of the Assets of the Diamondhead Property Owners Association, Inc. Prepared March 22, 2007. Bridge & Watson, Inc.

- Airport with airplane storage and tie downs
- Fishing ponds

**PUBLIC WORKS SERVICES**

A public works department is typically responsible for providing a variety of services including street and drainage maintenance, trash collection, water, and sanitary sewer services. These tasks are carried out with a variety of personnel and heavy equipment necessary to maintain the city's infrastructure. Additionally, the City will utilize the services of consulting engineers and contractors to carryout larger public works related jobs, such as street repaving and utility extensions. Currently, public works services are provided by the POA and the Diamondhead Water and Sewer District.

The POA maintains the many miles of private streets. Street maintenance includes duties such as paving and patching of streets, removing limbs from streets and rights-of-way, clearing drainage inlets and swales, and maintaining signage. The private streets are in the process of transitioning to the city for maintenance purposes.

Regardless of the entity responsible for maintenance, the City's interest is that streets and drainage systems be maintained at a high level. The condition of infrastructure relates to the quality of life in the city.

**WATER AND SANITARY SEWER SERVICE**

The Diamondhead community is served by the Diamondhead Water and Sewer District, which is a legal entity created by the Hancock County Board of Supervisors and holds the exclusive right to provide service within its boundaries. The service area of the water and sewer district is shown on Map 5.2.

The district consists of a defined geographic area for which it bears the responsibility of providing water and sewer services. As such, no service agreement is needed between the District and the City. Diamondhead does

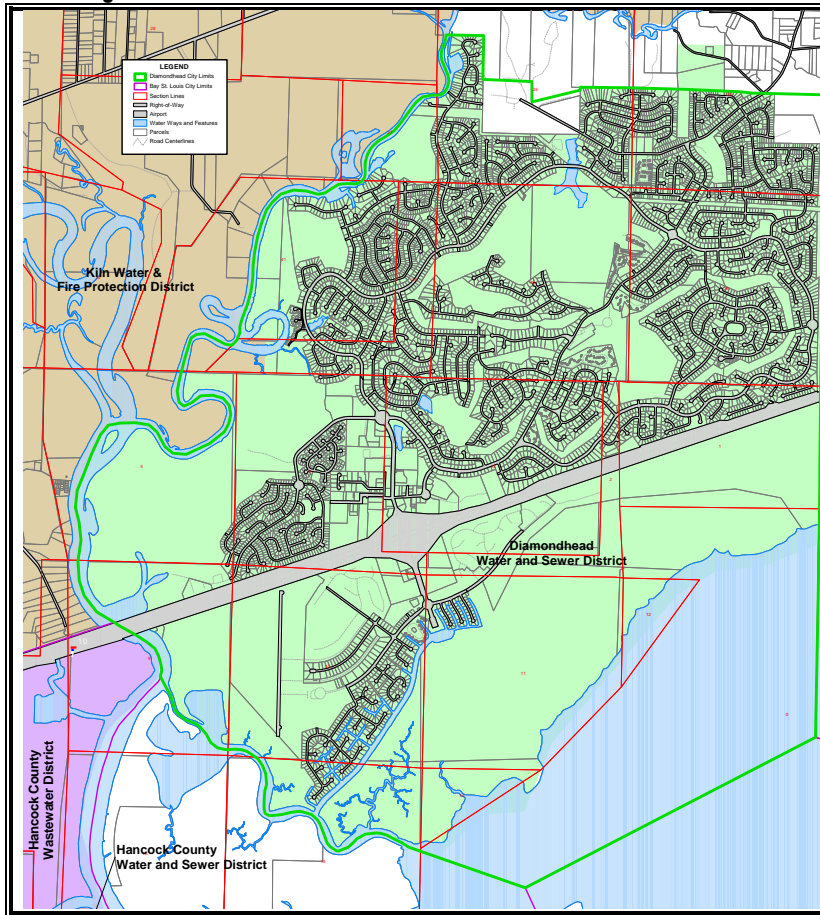
not have any authority over the district but that should not stand in the way of a cooperative working relationship to deliver high quality services to the City.

Water and sewer services are key components to future development. Additionally, the water system and related components such as fire hydrants are important to other services such as fire protection. The City should encourage and assist in continuing improvements to these services to meet the needs of the growing community.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

City of Diamondhead, Mississippi

**Map 5.2 Diamondhead Water and Sewer Certificated Areas within the Planning Area**



Source: Mississippi Public Service Commission; Hancock County GIS Depts.

### CODE ENFORCEMENT / BUILDING INSPECTION

Currently Hancock County provides building inspection and code enforcement services to the citizens of Diamondhead. As with other services previously discussed, Diamondhead is in the process of creating a code enforcement

## CHAPTER 5. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

department that will have the ability to perform inspections and issue necessary permits.

These services are especially important to ensure the safety and durability of construction and to maintain a positive image in the city. The absence of an effective code enforcement program can be problematic in that code violations create a negative impression upon those visiting or living in the city. The following series of photographs were not taken in Diamondhead, but do provide a demonstration of the type of problems that arise if not kept in check.



Top Left: An over utilized dumpster in a commercial area. The collection frequency is not what it should be.

Top Right: A dilapidated home is falling in. Not only is it unsafe and accessible to the public, it is an eyesore.

Bottom Left: A makeshift auto repair garage has sprung up in this residential neighborhood.

Bottom Right: This home has an overgrown and cluttered appearance.

Although beauty is in the eye of the beholder, each of the conditions in the photographs above can be remedied or avoided through the application and enforcement of proper codes. The conditions depicted do nothing to better their neighborhoods, increase property values, or provide a high quality of life.



The city must continually enforce its codes to avoid the blighting impacts of inadequate property maintenance.

Maintaining up to date codes is also important for a community. Building materials and methods change over time and modern building codes account for these changes, providing guidance to inspectors as to the proper use of materials or building systems. Updated codes also factor into a community's fire insurance rating. Diamondhead should continue to maintain up to date codes. However, because building codes are written on a national level, they can contain requirements that are not suitable for the regional conditions. Building codes should be carefully reviewed and amended as appropriate to suit the needs of Diamondhead.

### **SCHOOL FACILITIES**

The City of Diamondhead lies within the Hancock County School district. None of the school facilities are located within its city limits. The Hancock County School District is very large both in terms of geographic expanse and number of students. The City of Diamondhead constitutes only a small portion of district.

The Diamondhead community could benefit if a school were located within the community. Although land resources are limited and there are a number of new schools following Katrina, the City should seek to locate a school within its limits as needs increase.

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## **CHAPTER 6. TRANSPORTATION**

Transportation has a direct impact on land use patterns, as development typically occurs only where vehicular access is available. Transportation is also the key element that ties Diamondhead to the remainder of the world; however, transportation encompasses more than streets and automobiles and motorcycles. Pedestrians, bicyclists, golf carts and other low speed vehicles are also an important consideration in the transportation system.

Planning, design, and construction of a city's system of streets and thoroughfares is typically the responsibility of local government. Diamondhead, however, is unique in that the overwhelming majority of streets in the city are private. The Diamondhead community began developing in the 1970's and did so as a private community. As the community developed, the streets were not dedicated to the public and therefore remain private streets under the control of the Property Owners Association or some other homeowners organization. There are a very limited number of public streets within the City of Diamondhead presently.

Regardless of ownership and responsibility of the streets, transportation is a significant factor related to land use and development. Because Diamondhead has achieved a high level of buildout, the needs for new transportation routes are limited. As the city continues to buildout, additional internal streets (minor streets) will be needed to access properties. However the most significant transportation need will be in the form of improvements to the I-10 interchange and additional access along the south side of I-10.

As a private resort community with golf as a focal point, the residents of Diamondhead enjoy the ability to drive golf carts on the private streets. Recognizing this as a part of life in this community, legislative authority has been granted to the city to allow the continuance of this practice, with limitations.

### **STREET CLASSIFICATIONS**

For purposes of this plan, the street network in the city and planning area is assigned a functional classification. The functional classification identifies each street's role with respect to the city-wide transportation system. The functional classifications are defined as follows:

#### **Arterial Streets**

Arterial streets are those designed to move large volumes of traffic into and away from the city. In most cities, a conflict exists between through traffic on arterial streets and traffic seeking access to abutting land uses, particularly commercial properties that generate large volumes of traffic.

For Diamondhead, the only arterial transportation route in the city is I-10. I-10 is exclusively under the control of the Department of Transportation and any improvements will be designed in accordance with DOT guidelines. Therefore, this plan does not specify design criteria.

#### **Collector Streets**

Collector streets are intermediate thoroughfares that collect traffic from local streets and channel it into the arterial street system. As such, collector streets drain traffic from local streets and route this traffic to the arterial system or to local traffic generators such as small shopping facilities, and community centers. The design of collector streets includes a right-of-way of 80 feet and a pavement width of 45 feet measured from back of curb to back of curb. Because future collector streets are expected to serve commercial areas, sidewalks and curb and gutter are required.

**Figure 6.1 Collector Street Typical Section**



### Minor / Local Streets

Minor / Local streets are designed for low speed traffic and are laid out generally in a manner that discourages through traffic. The principal purpose of local streets is to provide access to adjoining property. The design of minor streets includes a right-of-way of 50 feet and a pavement width of 20 feet, which is consistent with the existing development in the community. As discussed below, new minor / local streets are not expected to incorporate curb and gutter or sidewalks into the design unless serving commercial areas.

### Alley

Alleys are designed to provide access to property from the rear of the property by the residents or owners of property. The design of alleys includes a right-of-way of 20 feet with a paved travel surface of 18 feet in commercial developments and 15 feet in residential developments. Alleys should be restricted to one way traffic with on street parking allowed along the adjacent minor streets for properties which are accessed by alleys. As a less formal element of the city's transportation network, alleys are not expected to have sidewalks or curb and gutter. Alleys often are designed to have a reverse crown to convey storm water.

**Figure 6.2 Alley Typical Section**



### TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PLAN

As previously mentioned, the most significant transportation improvements expected for the community would be improvements to increase the capacity of the I-10 interchange, and to create a frontage road access along the south side of I-10 to accommodate future potential development of the area east of Yacht Club Drive.

The southern frontage road (running east from the interchange) should not follow the alignment of Diamondhead Drive South. Doing so will only increase the traffic and incompatibility for the existing residential neighborhood (immediately east of the yacht club site). This frontage road should be aligned closer to the interchange to avoid this incompatibility.

Additionally, an access roadway will be needed to accommodate the expected commercial development west of the existing commercial area and north of I-10. Access to this area presently is only from Noma Drive. If and when this area develops, a second access point will be needed. An extension of Park Ten Drive could serve this purpose.

In addition to the improvements listed above, there are other transportation changes that are needed. First, an access point to the new library from Aila Street could make for a shorter, more convenient access to the library for some. This access point should be designed to accommodate all modes of



transportation, but should not be designed as a through access for automobiles.

This concept of golf cart access should be applied to the commercial areas as well. Although golf carts or other low speed vehicles can not be operated on public streets within the commercial area, merchants and landowners could create private access points and paths along which golf cart users could access and move about the commercial area.

Next, as the community continues to build out, local streets will have to be constructed to allow access to newly platted and developing properties. Examples of where this must take place include the undeveloped pockets of land around the golf course. Because these roadways will be unique to the layout of the development they serve, no specific routes or alignments are shown on Map 6.1, Transportation Plan.

From a general layout standpoint, these new local streets should be designed such that they connect with existing neighborhoods and avoid, to the extent possible, dead end streets. Although through automobile traffic should be discouraged, neighborhood streets should provide through connections to encourage walking, biking, or the utilization of low speed vehicles to move about the community.

### **I-10 Interchange Improvements**

In 2008, the annual average annual daily traffic (AADT) on Interstate 10 at the Diamondhead interchange was 49,000 vehicles per day. This flow was measured on I-10 and includes those just passing through the community. Traffic headed north into the main residential and commercial area of Diamondhead had an AADT of 12,000 vehicles per day while south of the interstate averaged only 2,900 vehicles per day. These flow patterns are no surprise given the lack of present development south of I-10.

As the community experiences further buildout, particularly with the prospect of commercialization of areas south of I-10, the capacity of the interchange will need to be increased. With the prospect of gaming, entertainment and resort type activities south of the interstate, substantial increases in traffic could occur. As development is proposed, the City should require

independent and careful traffic impact studies to determine the effects of development and to more precisely define the particular improvements needed to the interchange. The scope of any traffic study should not be limited to only the interchange; it should include all roadways impacted by the particular development.

### **Sidewalks and General Street Improvements**

Diamondhead is a community that has developed a significant transportation network to serve the community, but no sidewalks were incorporated into the street system. Most of the streets in the community are designed to discourage through traffic and therefore only serve neighborhoods within the community. As such, traffic flow is such that automobiles and pedestrians share the same roadway.

Additionally, streets in Diamondhead are designed with an open ditch cross section (as opposed to curb and gutter). Because of the prevalence of the open ditch design, and the fact that there is little room left to grow, developing residential areas will likely have a consistent street design with the remainder of the community.

The open ditch design has drawbacks, however. First, open ditches require a higher level of maintenance due to erosion and silting which lessen the flow capacity of the ditch and its appurtenances. Also, it is more difficult to mow an open ditch. In some cases, homeowners have covered the ditches. If a funding opportunity becomes available, the City should seek to convert the open ditch drainage system into a curb and gutter system or other system to provide for a higher level of maintenance.

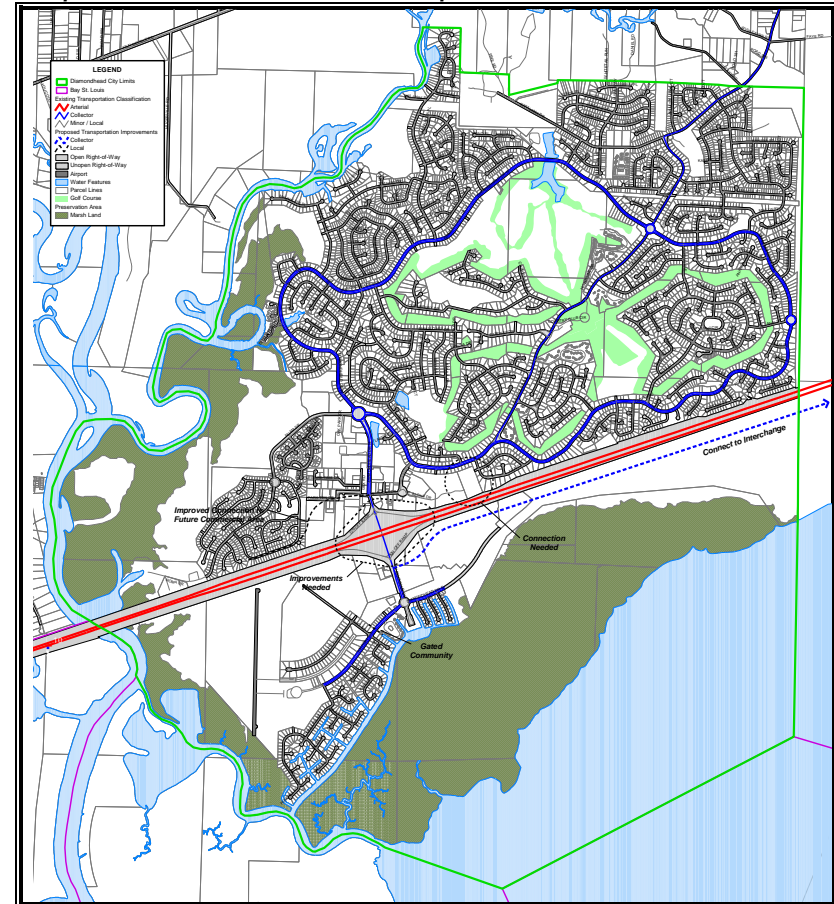
Commercial areas, however, should develop with curb and gutter street design as well as sidewalks. With higher traffic flow, commercial area streets are not pedestrian friendly unless sidewalks are provided. Additionally, curb and gutter serves to better define the street and is a lower maintenance feature in terms of maintaining the drainage system. Curb and gutter systems are also useful in maintaining a curb cut policy.

### Airport Road and Akoko Street Improvements

As noted in the Future Land Use section, the area West of Yacht Club Drive along Airport Drive and Akoko Street is to continue to be developed as Low and Medium Density Residential areas. Also noted in the Future Land Use section, the areas on the West and East sides of Yacht Club Drive are proposed to be developed as an Interstate Commercial / Gaming / Resort Area District. The type of developments associated with the district result in high traffic counts in the immediate area.

It is desirable to maintain the viability of the residential neighborhoods south of the interstate. In the future land use plan buffer areas are proposed to provide separation between commercial and residential land uses. Another step that could protect these neighborhoods is to convert them to gated communities. Doing so would limit the traffic flow through the neighborhood and perhaps provide a sense of heightened security for the residents.

**Map 6.1 Street Classification and Transportation Plan**



Source: Hancock County GIS Dept.; US Census Bureau 2010 TIGER Data; US Fish and Wildlife Service